

HD

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Volume 37 Issue 2 Winter 2017



PROCESSED

MAR 15 2017

LIBRARY

LIVING THE BEATITUDES

*Did Jesus intend them to be read as a communal challenge?
For personal piety? Or for both? How do you embody them?*

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Human Development Magazine is a quarterly publication for people involved in the work of fostering the growth of others. This includes persons involved in religious leadership and formation, spiritual direction, pastoral care, education and those interested in the development of the whole person.

CONTACT US

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

(ISSN 0197-3096) Winter 2017 Volume 37 Issue 2.
Human Development Magazine is published quarterly by Guest House, Inc. 1601 Joslyn Road, Lake Orion, Michigan 48360-1139.

Application to mail at Periodicals Postage Prices is pending at Lake Orion, MI and additional mailing offices.

PRINT SUBSCRIPTION RATE

United States and Canada, \$39.50 for one year; all other countries \$59.50 for one year; online/digital subscription: \$39.50 for one year.

Please visit website for discount subscription rates hdmag.org

Single Print copies: United States and Canada, \$10.00 plus shipping; all other countries, \$20.00 plus shipping.

POSTMASTER

Send address changes to

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

P.O. Box 292674, Kettering, OH 45429-0674

Copyright 2017 HUMAN DEVELOPMENT. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Send new subscriptions, renewals, and change of address (please include mailing label if available) to:

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

P.O. Box 292674

Kettering, OH 45429-0674

Letters to the editor and all other correspondence may be sent to:

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT MAGAZINE

E-mail: editor@hdmag.org

Phone: 1-877-545-0557

VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT HDMAG.ORG

Photo Credits:

123rf.com, Adobe Stock, iStock Photo

Cover Photo: Church of Beatitudes Adobe Stock



CONTENT



6

THE FLOW OF BLESSINGS



16

BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT



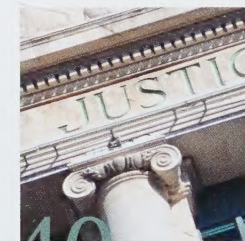
24

BLESSED ARE THEY WHO MOURN



32

BLESSED ARE THE MEEK



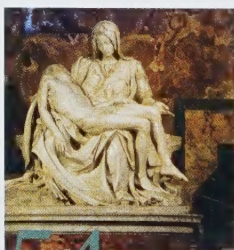
40

BLESSED ARE THOSE HUNGERING AND THIRSTING FOR JUSTICE



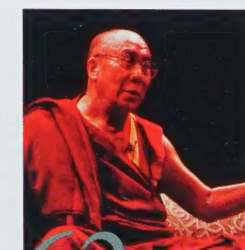
46

BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL



54

BLESSED ARE THE PURE OF HEART



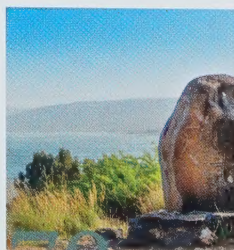
62

BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS



70

BLESSED ARE THOSE PERSECUTED FOR JUSTICE'S SAKE



78

THE BEATITUDES: AN EXAMEN

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Winter 2017

Dear friends of Human Development Magazine:

"Have a blessed day!" For many years I heard that greeting each morning as I climbed up the back stairway of the club where I work out. An African-American woman of the night shift cleaning staff was always waiting as I rounded the bend of the stairwell at about 4:45 am. (She did not know I was a priest; as I later discovered, those lovely words were her greeting for everyone.) And I would respond, "God bless you, too!" We both smiled and returned to our endeavors.

That simple story encapsulates much of the wisdom of Scripture: we are already and always blessed by the loving presence of God – no matter what the circumstances. We simply need to be more eager to name and proclaim these blessings – as Jesus modeled for us in the Beatitudes. As the Catholic Catechism puts it, we are made for Beatitude; blessings are the norm, not the exception. Hence this quarter's issue dedicated to the Beatitudes.

Why would Human Development Magazine dedicate an entire issue to the Beatitudes? After all, we are not a journal dedicated to exegesis of Scripture but rather, we seek to bring together theology, spirituality and psychology so as to help everyone become a more complete person and therefore more open to the presence of God for us and through us. Our editorial team felt very strongly that the Beatitudes present the spirituality of Jesus telescoped into a few words. They speak about the necessary qualities to become a "whole" person and a fully engaged Christian community. The virtues enfolded in the Beatitudes are countercultural; to accept them and believe them requires a radical conversion of mind and heart, a different way of prioritizing what matters most in life.

Human Development seeks to "stand-under" the Gospel: with Christ, we look at the reality of human experience from within. We search for the grace hidden but powerfully present within all the circumstances of life, especially when we are not in control, when we find ourselves vulnerable and dependent on God and others. In a culture that has much confusion about what it means to be a person of integrity, the Beatitudes give us a simple recipe for bringing all the pieces together, overcoming fragmentation, isolation and extreme individualism.

We all want to be "righteous" before God – not self-righteous – but righteous in the sense of living justly, developing and sharing our talents and helping others to do the same. Ultimately, it is never a question of our righteousness, but rather, God's righteousness! We become righteous, people of integrity, "whole" communities precisely as we accept the mystery of being poor, meek and merciful, as we embrace the reality of tears, the struggle for purity and take the risk of being peace makers, even if it means being persecuted.

When our Editorial Board discussed potential authors for the various Beatitudes we naively thought that the Beatitudes needed no general introduction. As we began reviewing the very engaging essays, we realized that the diversity in content and style necessitated an overall introduction to the theme of "Beatitudes." I gladly accepted the challenge and in my introductory essay attempt to situate the Beatitudes within the overall content of Scripture, emphasizing especially a communal reading of the Beatitudes as well as giving special attention to the fact that both Matthew and Luke emphasize the Beatitudes as describing communities experiencing persecution.

Father Bernie Owens, a Jesuit working in Nairobi, Kenya, volunteered to write about his experience in Kenya as part of a community living the Beatitude "Blessed are the poor in spirit." I know you will find

his stories engaging and challenging. We are blessed that Sister Joyce Rupp, OSM, accepted my invitation to write on a topic very familiar to her readers – "Blessed are they who mourn." In a very poetic way she speaks about her own experiences of grief and how she came to a new communion with God as she faced painful losses in her life.

Father Justin Kelly, SJ, a professor at U of D Mercy in Detroit, tackles the third Beatitude – that the meek inherit the Earth. He sub-titled his article "The power of the apparently powerless," thus emphasizing that meekness is "power held in reserve."

The Beatitude on hungering and thirsting for justice seemed "tailor made" for Father Vic Clore and his community of Christ the King Parish in Detroit. He explains how they truly embody that Beatitude. He also addresses many other contemporary examples of the struggle for justice and peace.

As Reverend Anne Marie Kidder of the Presbyterian tradition addresses the fifth Beatitude – "Blessed are the merciful," she uses Etty Hillesum as an example. Most of us are already familiar with Etty Hillesum's journals written in the Nazi concentration camp. The essay breaks new ground by documenting how Etty Hillesum was transformed into being merciful toward her captors as she learned to accept God's mercy for herself.

Dr. Cooney-Hathaway, a member of our Editorial Board and Professor at Sacred Heart Major Seminary in Detroit, volunteered to write on the sixth Beatitude with regard to the pure of heart. She presents St. Therese of Lisieux as a model of such purity and her essay describes purity of heart as "willing one thing," or being "single-hearted."

A man dedicated to peace and justice throughout his life, Jim Forest, gladly agreed to address the Beatitude on being peacemakers. After reviewing the life-conversions of St. Francis of Assisi, Jim Forest then applies some lessons for today on how we can be "ears and eyes" for peacemaking.

Dr. Damian Zynda treats the eighth Beatitude which concerns those who are persecuted for the sake of justice; as a focus, she goes into great detail about the life-long conversion process of Blessed Oscar Romero, noting in particular how he went from "self-persecution" to a state of spiritual freedom in which he was able to peacefully accept misunderstanding and persecution from fellow leaders of the Church as well as from the governmental leaders of El Salvador. Her essay is truly an intriguing read.

Finally, it seemed to us on the Editorial Board that it might be appropriate to have an examen of Conscience that would draw together themes and reflection questions from the entire issue. From the Editor's Chair, I can say that putting this issue together has truly been a labor of love and has taken me deeply into the mind and heart of Christ. It has also helped me appreciate that we experience the living Christ in communities that embody the Beatitudes.

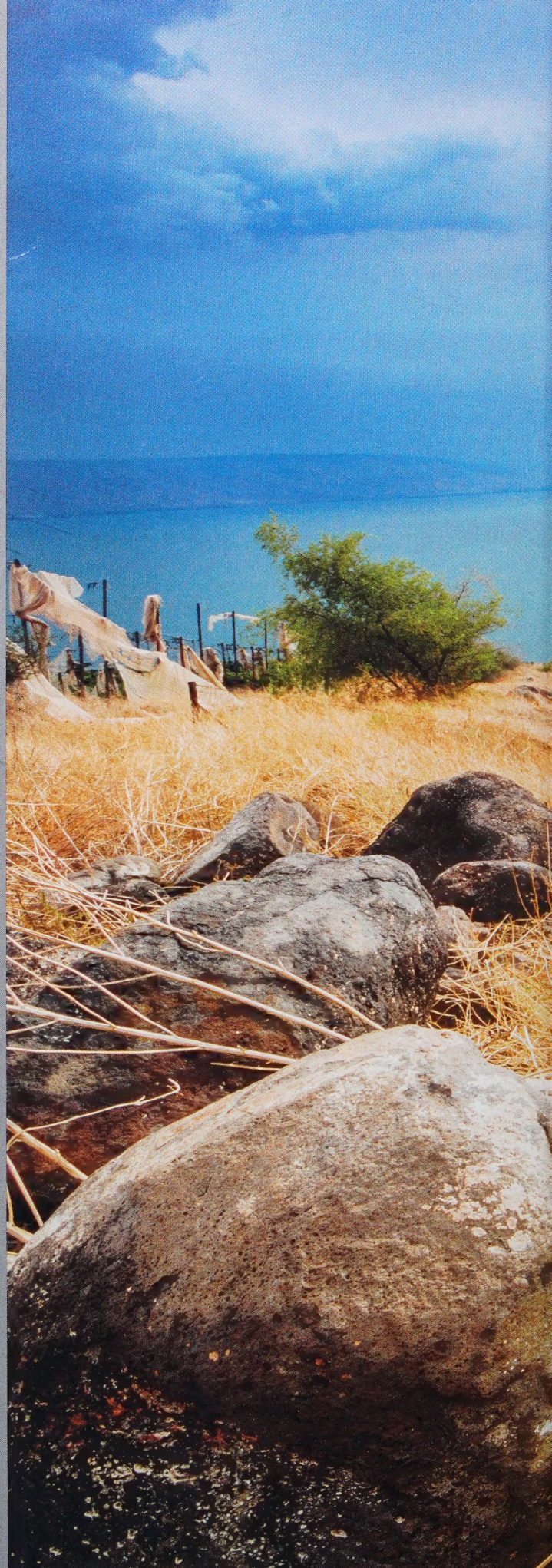
"Have a blessed day!" Together, let us receive and share the flow of God's blessings.

Your brother in the Lord,

Msgr. John P. Zeng

HD EDITORIAL BOARD

Linda Amadeo, R.N., M.S.
Monica Applewhite, Ph.D.
Most Rev. Gregory M. Aymond, M.Div.
Rev. William A. Barry, S.J., Ph.D.
Brother Paul Bednarczyk, C.S.C., M.A.
Denise Bertin-Epp, RN, BScN, MSA
Rev. Brendan Callaghan, S.J., M.A., M.Phil., M.T.H.
Very Rev. John J. Cecero, S.J., Ph.D.
James J. Coupe, Psy.D., M.B.A.
Rev. Thomas M. Dragga, D.Min.
Rev. Thomas Gaunt, S.J., Ph.D.
Brother Brendan Geary, F.M.S., Ph.D.
Rev. Anthony J. Gittins, C.S.Sp., Ph.D.
Robert M. Hamma, M.Div.
Most Rev. Donald F. Hanchon, M.Div.
Sr. Dorothy Heiderscheid, O.S.F., ACSW
Rev. Msgr. Richard Henning, S.T.D.
Baroness Sheila Hollins, Psy.D., LL.D.
Sr. Carroll Juliano, S.H.C.J., M.A.
Mary Elizabeth Kenel, Ph.D.
Most Rev. Gerald F. Kicanas, D.D.
Very Rev. José Magadia, S.J., Ph.D.
Rev. Matt Malone, S.J., M.A., S.T.B., B.D.
Sr. Donna Markham, O.P., Ph.D.
Rev. Shawn McKnight, S.T.D.
Very Rev. Ronald Mercier, S.J., Ph.D.
Rev. Agbonkhianmeghe Orobator, S.J., Th.D.
Rev. John Pavlik, O.F.M., Cap., M.Div.
Sr. Ana Maria Pineda, R.S.M., S.T.D.
Thomas Plante, Ph.D., ABPP
Sr. Katarina Schuth, O.S.F., Ph.D.
Rev. Myles Sheehan, S.J., M.D.
Brother Loughlan Sofield, S.T., Psy.D.
Elizabeth J. Susman, Ph.D.
Most Rev. David P. Talley, M.S.W., J.C.D.
His Eminence Joseph Cardinal Tobin, C.Ss.R.
Most Rev. Thomas G. Wenski, M.A., M.Div.
Robert J. Wicks, Psy.D.
Sr. Carol Zinn, S.S.J., Ed.D.
Rev. Hans Zollner, S.J., Ph.D.





THE EIGHT BEATITUDES OF JESUS

**“Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

**Blessed are they who mourn,
for they shall be comforted.**

**Blessed are the meek,
for they shall inherit the earth.**

**Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they shall be satisfied.**

**Blessed are the merciful,
for they shall be shown mercy.**

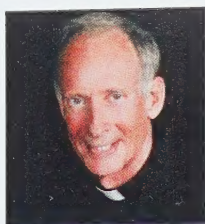
**Blessed are the pure of heart,
for they shall see God.**

**Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they shall be called children of God.**

**Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”**

Gospel of St. Matthew 5:3-10

EDITORIAL TEAM



Msgr. John Zenz
Executive Editor



Robert Koval
CEO
Guest House, Inc.



Bridget Bearss, RSCJ
Past Chair of Board
Guest House, Inc.



Kim Critz
Design & Website Editor



Marc Dyker
Managing Editor



Jeff Jay
Associate Editor



Richard Hittle, SJ
Associate Editor



Patricia Cooney-Hathaway
Associate Editor



Colleen Richards
Associate Editor

UPCOMING GUEST HOUSE EVENTS

April 24-27, 2017
Alumni Men's Retreat
Guest House Scripps Mansion
Lake Orion, MI

May 3-5, 2017
Walking With the Wounded
Guest House Scripps Mansion
Lake Orion, MI

May 20, 2017
3rd Annual Run Over
Addiction 5K
Guest House Campus
Lake Orion, MI

June 7-9, 2017
Walking With the Wounded
Guest House Scripps Mansion
Lake Orion, MI

June 12, 2017
32nd Annual Golf Classic
Oakhurst Golf & Country Club
Clarkston, MI

July 2-8, 2017
ICAP Retreat
Carmelite Retreat Center
Darien, IL

July 10-12, 2017
16th Annual Guest House
Summer Leadership Conference
Biltmore Providence Hotel
Providence, RI

July 31-August 3, 2017
Alumni Reunion
Seminary of the Immaculate
Conception
Huntington, NY

August 7-12, 2017
ICAP Retreat
Scripps Mansion
Lake Orion, MI

YOUR LEGACY LIVES ON IN THE CHURCH

Estate gifts notably impact the ministry of Guest House. Creating a gift through your will or trust is a meaningful way to leave a legacy that will make a difference for the greater good of the Catholic Church. Your estate gift can support a specific area or program, such as education or scholarships. Guest House is proud to welcome and offer treatment to all Catholic clergy and religious regardless of their ability to afford services.

Please contact Erika Walker,
Vice President of Development,
for more information about creating a gift
that reflects your wishes and your spirit:

248-393-8933

ewalker@guesthouse.org



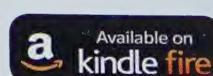
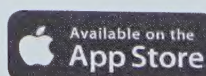
VISIT OUR WEBSITES
at HDMag.org or GuestHouse.org

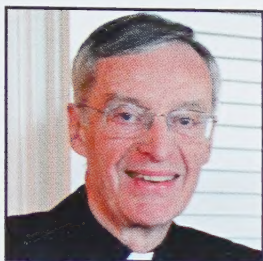


FOLLOW US
On Facebook/[humandevlopmentmagazine](https://www.facebook.com/humandevlopmentmagazine)

GO DIGITAL!

DOWNLOAD THE HD MAGAZINE APP

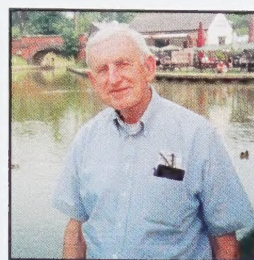




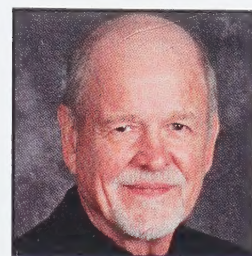
Rev. Bernie Owens



Joyce Rupp, OSM



Rev. Justin Kelly, S.J.



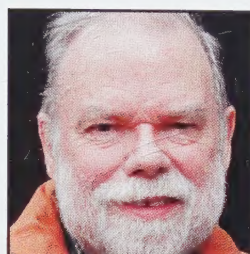
Rev. Victor Clore, PhD



Annemarie S. Kidder



Dr. Cooney Hathaway



Jim Forest



Damian Zynda, Th.D.

INFORMATION FOR AUTHORS

The editors of *Human Development* are quite eager to publish articles that translate the latest research in psychology, health, medicine, and spirituality to ministry, formation and practice. Our hope is that *Human Development* will be known as the most user-friendly ministry publication. This will require making complicated theoretical knowledge, research, and concepts understandable and applicable to the personal and professional lives of our readers.

Since ministry is in a time of significant transition and change, we anticipate that the articles we publish will enlighten and positively influence the daily decisions and practices of those in Church leadership, ministry formation, spiritual direction, and counseling of any kind. There are also a number of previously under-appreciated forces that uniquely influence ministry and ministers: cultural, organizational, and situational factors. We intend to highlight and honor these factors in the pages of *Human Development*. Accordingly, we ask prospective authors to be mindful of these considerations in their manuscripts.

Manuscripts are received with the understanding

that they have not been previously published and are not currently under consideration elsewhere. Feature articles should be limited to 4,500 words (15 double-spaced pages), with no more than six recommended citations and/or readings; filler items of between 500 and 1,000 words will be considered. All accepted material is subject to editing. When quoting sacred scripture, the New Revised Standard Version is preferred. All manuscripts are to be prepared according to the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th edition).

Letters are welcome and will be published as space permits and at the discretion of the editors. Such communications should not exceed 600 words and are subject to editing.

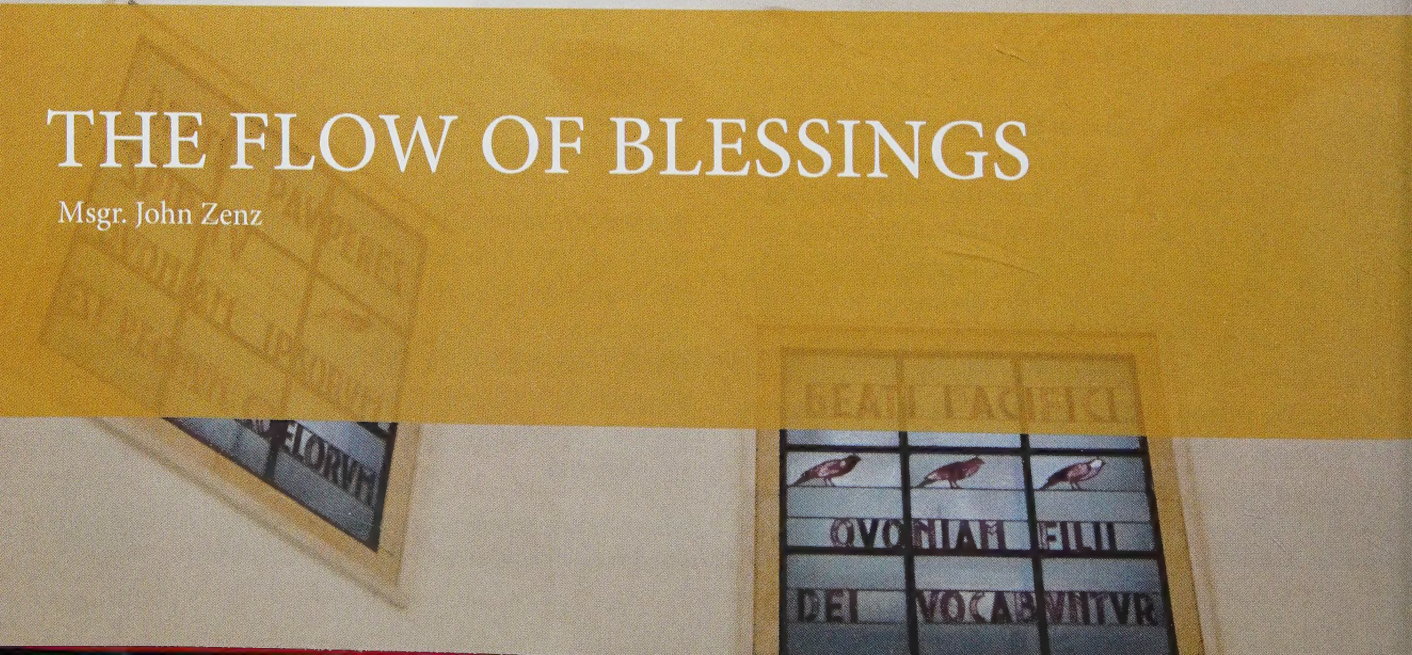
Authors are responsible for the completeness and accuracy of proper names in both text and Bibliography/suggested readings. Acknowledgments must be given when substantial material is quoted from other publications. Provide author name(s), title of article, title of journal or book, volume number, page(s), month and year, and publisher's permission to use material.


Manuscripts should be submitted to Msgr. John Zenz at editor@hdmag.org as an email attachment.



THE FLOW OF BLESSINGS

Msgr. John Zenz





A PORTRAIT OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

In 1936, when the current Church of the Beatitudes was being built high on the hill above the shore of the Sea of Galilee, it was designed with an octagonal shape, each wall commemorating one of the eight Beatitudes. The circular shape of the building proclaims a message: living the Beatitudes is an on-going, never ending cycle. The Church of Beatitudes is, of course, not just a building in the Holy Land but the Church – in action, especially as we celebrate the Holy Eucharist. Blessings received from the Lord send us forth in deeds of service. As individuals but even more so as Church, we are constantly blessed and blessing.

As Pope St. John Paul II once wrote, the Beatitudes are not only a concise summary of all Jesus' teachings but also His self-portrait. He embodied these teachings and is Himself the blessing promised in each of the Beatitudes. The mystery of Christ and His Body the Church cannot be captured in any painting, mosaic or building, but we ourselves

– individually and even more collectively – embody aspects of His identity and mission. No one of the eight Beatitudes adequately sums up Christ’s teaching but all of them together offer a portrait of the Lord and His Body, the Church. Likewise, no one of us in isolation can fulfill the Beatitudes, but together we make them a living mosaic.

This article will address the original setting and purpose of the Beatitudes in both Matthew and Luke. Since the Matthean version of the Beatitudes is the classic text most often referred to, in this issue of Human Development we will address each of the eight Beatitudes of Matthew. This article serves as an overview of the Beatitudes in general and is intended to provide a framework for the essays that follow.

A FEW POINTS THAT YOU WILL SEE FURTHER DEVELOPED IN THE PARAGRAPHS THAT FOLLOW:

- The Beatitudes are dynamic and inter-active. They describe qualities or virtues of giving and receiving. They are fluid, always in motion, a work-in-progress rather than a point of “arrival.” The Beatitudes are fulfilled in relationships. The Beatitudes are fluid also in the sense of reciprocity: in the interaction of family, spouses “bless” each other and children “bless” their parents. The Beatitudes are never one-way: even God receives blessings back from us!
- Sometimes, Matthew’s Beatitudes are read as if the second clause is a promise to be fulfilled in the future, in the Kingdom. But in Matthew’s spirituality, for those with eyes to see, the Kingdom is already unfolding in the reality of the present and all its challenges; the blessedness is already present.
- While each of the eight Beatitudes deserves to be read and studied separately, ultimately, they can only be fully appreciated as a unit; each Beatitude is complemented by the others. The Beatitudes need to be seen in the context of the whole

Scripture, Old Testament and New Testament. For example, the pattern used by both Matthew and Luke in presenting their Beatitudes has a close affinity with Psalm 1 and all the Wisdom literature: blessings come upon those who keep the Law. Like Psalm 1, both Matthew and Luke end their treatment of Beatitudes with reference to a house built on rock.

- The Beatitudes are addressed to the disciples and a larger circle of followers or “seekers.” The verbs are plural so we read them not so much as ideals for individual spiritual perfection but rather as descriptive of an ecclesial spirituality. The Beatitudes are about the “human development” not just of individuals but of communities!
- At the heart of the Beatitudes in both Matthew and Luke is language about being persecuted for being identified with Christ. Reading the Beatitudes with Christ at the center, embodied by a community experiencing trials and suffering from within and from the outside, the Beatitudes take on their full meaning.

Ultimately, the Beatitudes are Eucharistic. Each member of the community joins his/her voice and we, as one Body, proclaim our shared identity in Christ: “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”

BLESSINGS EXPERIENCED

*Thee, God, I come from, to Thee go,
All day long I like fountain flow
From thy hand out, swayed about
Mote-like in thy mighty glow.*

*What I know of thee I bless,
As acknowledging thy stress
On my being and as seeing
something of thy holiness.* G. M. Hopkins

The 19th century English Jesuit poet, Gerard Manley Hopkins, understood the rhythm and spirituality of the Beatitudes: initially all blessings flow from

"Every gift, every blessing is a way God places His "stress" on us - at times a welcomed caress or tender touch but at other moments - a forceful push or pull or chronic ache in our heart. But, scratch the surface, even the stresses that seem most painful actually unleash a surprising grace."

God to us – constantly, even when we might at first glance not view them as blessings. Every gift, every blessing is a way God places His “stress” on us – at times a welcomed caress or tender touch but at other moments - a forceful push or pull or chronic ache in our heart. But, scratch the surface, even the stresses that seem most painful actually unleash a surprising grace, a discovery of the nearness and intimacy of our loving Creator-Savior, offering us a deeper experience of communion with Him and a sharing in the mystery of all members of His Body undergoing similar stresses.

Blessings flow from God to all who are open to welcome them and be changed by them. Accepting divine blessings means acknowledging our dependence on the Lord in the manner of a smiling child feeling totally loved. Like the flow of splashing water or a steady relentless downpour of rain, blessings can startle us and catch us off guard, but for all that, they purify us and free us from any illusion of control.

From the first lines of Genesis through the concluding verses of Revelation, God is always blessing people and things. Such blessings are God’s way of touching and consecrating the physical and psychological challenges of life. Accepting the blessings/stresses of life, we partner with God and others in unpacking and unveiling the abiding treasure within our daily experiences. Christ Himself blessed, broke and handed over the bread of His very life: to be blessed brings with it the responsibility to let it flow through us for the life and nourishment of others. Blessed and blessing, an eternal flow of life and love – such is God’s being with and for us.

NEW TESTAMENT BEATITUDES: JOYS DISCOVERED

In the Scriptures there are two different sets of Hebrew and Greek words to describe blessings. The first set of terms are Hebrew *beraka* and its Greek counterpart *eulogeo*; they concern the blessing of God and by God that happen in prayer or worship.

These words of blessing (*beraka* and *eulogeo*) clearly refer to God’s initiative in showing loving mercy, protection and healing for individuals and communities. Human words of blessing are actually a response of gratitude for this divine providential care; we bless the Lord who has [first] blessed us. A classic example from the New Testament would be the hymn of Zechariah, “Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel; He has come to His people and set them free...” As we discover and accept God’s blessing, we reflect back to Him our gratitude in prayer and by a life of justice and deeds of mercy.

The Beatitudes of Matthew and Luke are based on a different set of words - the Hebrew *ashir* and the Greek *makarios*. These terms describe blessing as happiness, not so much a joy conferred upon people by God, but rather the recognition of an already existing state of happiness which will be completely fulfilled in the Kingdom. Again here, the individual or group has been blessed by God’s initiative and not as a result of human effort. Our role is to allow the blessing to shape our mind and heart into a new way of thinking and acting wherein all is gift.

The New Testament Beatitudes take up the promises made to Abraham and extend them; they are no longer confined to blessing an earthly territory but instead speak of a sharing in the Lord’s Kingdom

which transcends space and time. In this sense, the Beatitudes refer to a state of being, a way of entering into the mind and heart of Christ. Allowing the Holy Spirit to partner with us, we are privileged to share in God's own Beatitude or joy as we embrace the particular circumstances of our dependency and vulnerability.

As the theologian George Hunsinger of the Reformed tradition would remind us, we need to read the Beatitudes "moving outward from a center in Christ." Or even more precisely, as Brendan Byrne, SJ would add, we read them from within a faith community that struggles to be true to its vocation and identity, its mission as the remnant or *anawim* community.

A COMMUNITY BLESSED TO SHARE CHRIST'S DESTINY

In both Matthew and Luke, the Beatitudes are addressed to the whole community; the "you" experiencing blessing is second person plural. While both sets of these Beatitudes have their particular focus and style, Matthew and Luke share a common Christological perspective, particularly as they both speak about being persecuted for the faith, insulted and falsely accused on account of our association with Christ. (See the extended verses on Luke's fourth Beatitude and Matthew 5:11, a verse sometimes called the "ninth" Beatitude.)

Luke's version situates Jesus "on the plain" – thus meeting His disciples and the crowd on an even playing field, eye-ball to eye-ball. Following the style of the Psalms and Wisdom literature, Luke offers four positives, four blessings followed immediately with four negatives or woes.

Matthew, by contrast, has Jesus, the teacher of the New Law, ascend the mountain, thus evoking the memory of Moses, the teacher of the First Covenant. But whereas Moses received the Law from God and then handed it on to the people, Jesus Himself imparts the Law and offers a new interpretation of it. As teacher, Jesus sits. He addresses His disciples – then (and now); His words are to so impact the disciples of every age that they in turn – as a community – will transform the world. The "woes" in Matthew's Gospel are not mentioned until chapter 23 at the conclusion of the public life and teaching of Jesus. In the final parable of Jesus in Matthew 25, the Lord greets those who have acted with justice as "Come, you blessed..." Thus, one could say the whole Gospel of Matthew is an extended commentary on the Sermon on the Mount and our responsibility to make those teachings the foundation and touchstone of our lives.

The Beatitudes or blessings are a commendation of certain values and attitudes; they are not a strict code of law but an invitation to share Jesus' way of life. As Christ made Himself poor, we are challenged to join Him in being valued for what we do not have. As Christ was meek and humble, we consider how to live in a manner that is non-competitive and non-grasping. We join Christ in His "inner circle" as we mourn with Him over our sins and share together the comfort of our Paraclete, the Holy Spirit. When we hunger and thirst for righteousness, we understand that He is hungering through us. We come to recognize our communal desire for wholeness.

Taken as a group, the first four Beatitudes of Matthew describe people in a situation of need; we

"We need to read the Beatitudes "moving outward from a center in Christ"... read them from within a faith community that struggles to be true to its vocation and identity, its mission as the remnant or *anawim* community."



discover and share the very life of God precisely because our “insufficiency” provides room for God’s presence and action in us and through us. The God of the Beatitudes constantly desires to give of Himself or we could say “dis-possess” Himself: The Father gives all to the Son and, totally empty of self, the Son accepts all from the Father and then immediately returns all that the Father has shared with Him.

BLESSED ARE THE FAITHFUL

The second set of Beatitudes (numbers 5-8) move from a focus on those who are humanly “in need” to those who are faithful because they choose to live with and for Jesus. As in the first four Beatitudes, the joy discovered or received is Christ Himself: offering mercy, we receive Christ. In purity of heart, we see Christ. As peacemakers, we encounter Christ and when persecuted, we share in the very suffering of Christ Himself.

Again, these four Beatitudes are in the plural because intimacy with Christ necessarily entails an ever-deepening communion with all members of His Body. The giving and receiving of mercy, the purity

of shared vision, joint partnership in works of peace and justice and the experience of persecution all take us out of isolation into the all-encompassing wholeness of God. Instead of fragmentary “episodes” of peace-making or occasional deeds of mercy, or temporary waves of pure vision, we discover ourselves totally immersed together with all our brothers and sisters in the always cleansing and refreshing waters of the Lord. Together, we embody Christ and thus fulfill the Beatitudes.

A LIVING WORD

Over the centuries theologians and spiritual writers have debated how to interpret these teachings of Jesus: are they an Evangelical Law or an eschatological, idealized vision of Christian living? How seriously are we to take them? Could any person or community ever really embody them?

Part of the answer lies in seeing the integral connection of morality with spirituality. The Beatitudes are part of a living “conversation” between these two disciplines of theology; moral laws are for the sake of spiritual relationships. Secondly it is



important to remember the Matthean Beatitudes are the introduction to the larger Sermon on the Mount and Jesus' lengthy discussion about interiorizing the Commandments. The Beatitudes are teachings that speak to the heart; they emphasize the interior dispositions of discipleship rather than demanding some external conformity to law.

The external and internal come together in the Beatitudes inasmuch as the first four Beatitudes describe situations of need and then in the second set of Beatitudes, four ways of putting that faith into concrete action. As St. Thomas Aquinas would say, the evangelical "law" is infused by the Holy Spirit. The Beatitudes are truly works of the Holy Spirit – God accomplishing His purpose through us.

We also should read the eight Beatitudes as a unit, one Beatitude complementing the next. They are meant to be understood as a "living text" enfolded in the Christian community. The eight Beatitudes are so many voices blending together in one chorus proclaiming the saving presence of Jesus Christ.

The Beatitudes are stated in the indicative mode; they are statements of fact more than commands. Actually they are statements about Jesus who gives Himself unceasingly and invites us to join Him. Note also

that the Beatitudes are in the passive voice: "Blessed are...they shall be..." As Hunsinger points out, the blessings are all "divine passives," for it is God who is the source and Christ alone who can perfectly embody them. We accomplish them only by the grace of Christ and the presence of the Holy Spirit.

BEATITUDE AS A VOCATION

The Catechism of the Catholic Church, St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas, all start their presentations on the moral life with a discussion of human desire. As the Catechism says, we have within us a "vocation to Beatitude," a natural desire for happiness. The Beatitudes confront us with a path to fulfillment, happiness and wholeness that is totally different from the direct pursuit of happiness in earthly terms.

St. Augustine saw the Beatitudes as a model for progressive ascent from attachment to worldly goods to the ultimate goal, being free enough to receive the crown of martyrdom. Based on his own life's struggles, he suggests the first three Beatitudes refer to conversion: being poor in spirit is the beginning of wisdom. Meekness moves us to judge ourselves and all things by the Divine Word and study of that Word helps us recognize our sins and mourn for them. The five remaining Beatitudes describe the continuing

search for Wisdom: study of Scripture prompts a hunger and thirst for justice and helps us recognize our need for God's mercy. As we see with God's light, we submit to God's desire for peace and we are willing to suffer persecution for our faith. All the way through the Beatitudes, from start to finish and over again, the Holy Spirit directs the journey.

THE BEATITUDES OF POPE FRANCIS

In autumn 2016 as Pope Francis was inaugurating observances for the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation in Stockholm, Sweden, he suggested that contemporary Christians need a new version of the Beatitudes, complementing the traditional ones, focused on the circumstances and challenges of our day. His Beatitudes are provided below in bold with my commentary.

"Blessed are those who remain faithful while enduring evils inflicted on them by others and forgive them from their heart." Much like several of the eight Beatitudes of Matthew, Pope Francis refers to the blessing of God coming upon those who "remain faithful" in the midst of difficult challenges. He specifically refers to genuine forgiveness, even toward those who have done us wrong. Obviously this Beatitude resonates with the attitude of Christ dying on the cross as he forgave those who were putting Him to death and dispensed pardon to the so-called "good thief." Evil surrounds us but it can be overcome by our refusal to allow it to poison our minds and hearts. This is true of individuals and of communities.

"Blessed are those who look into the eyes of the abandoned and marginalized and show them their closeness." The Holy Father speaks about the blessing we can experience by actually looking into the eyes of all who are abandoned or marginalized – because of their skin color, ethnic or racial background, physical or psychological challenges. Certainly this Beatitude is a further explication of the sixth Beatitude which promises that those who are pure of heart will see God. There is an interactive dimension to this Beatitude; for that reason the Pope also

speaks about drawing close to those who have been forgotten. As Christ came to be with us, we have the privilege of allowing His love to flow through us to others and receive it back from them in the intimacy of human relationships.

"Blessed are those who see God in every person and strive to make others also discover Him." This Beatitude is also a further commentary on purity of heart but from a slightly different perspective – the realization that we are all mutually seeking God, even if we do not know it or admit it. Written into the very core of our human nature is a desire for God. We will be blessed and bring blessings to others to the extent that we share with each other our common hunger and restlessness, our search for God. Together, we will then discover God's search for us.

"Blessed are those who protect and care for our common home." This Beatitude refers to ecology, but sees contemporary questions from a deeper, timeless foundation: we are stewards of life, partners with God in caring for the world. We are blessed when we keep in touch with the freshness of the original creation and strive to be converted to the Earth on which we walk, more grateful for sister water and brother air. This Beatitude clearly resonates with being merciful and peacemakers.

"Blessed are those who renounce their own comfort in order to help others." In this blessing, we are challenged to enter into the world of the other. Reading the Beatitudes "from the side of Christ," we recognize Christ in every other, including ourselves.

"Blessed are those who pray and work for full-communion between Christians." Given the context in which Pope Francis articulated these new Beatitudes, we are reminded of the many challenges we face as Christians today: we live in a world that is very divided– economically, ideologically, racially and even theologically and spiritually. As those who want to embody the Beatitudes, we will be credible only to the extent that we speak and act with one voice.

UP AND DOWN THE MOUNTAIN TOGETHER

In the Beatitudes of Matthew, Jesus climbed a mountain and spoke to a circle of disciples gathered around Him. Eventually He and the disciples had to descend from the mountain to the reality of what was happening in the valley below. As they did so, the Beatitudes evolved from being inspiring sayings and became formative words to live by, a message to shape the values and agendas of individuals and communities. The members of Matthew's community must have cherished those words and realized that observing them was part of the way they would also fulfill the Eucharistic command of Jesus: "Do this in memory of me."

Just as Jesus during His earthly life and even after the Resurrection moved up and down the mountains of ancient Israel, so too we struggle today to express our relationship with the Lord and how it also affects all other relationships in our lives. Thanks be to God, we do all this not alone but with the support and challenge of each other.

POSTLUDE

As I was writing this essay, I was "interrupted" unexpectedly by someone with serious spiritual issues. By the grace of God I happened to be available just when he needed me; I felt blessed to be God's instrument of blessing him. But as I later reflected in my examen, I realized he also had been a blessing to me; in counseling him, I had received new insights into my own struggles. The Beatitudes

are blessings-in-motion. They spring up in all the times and situations when we are - individually and collectively - most vulnerable. As Christ's Body, we are constantly receiving and sharing the blessings of God. Together, we are the portrait of the Beatitudes, the living Lord and we are that "embodied" blessing for each other and for the world as we receive and return to the Lord the blessings of the Holy Eucharist.

Bailey, Kenneth. *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic 2008.

Byrne, Brendan. *Lifting the Burden*. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2004.

Cantalamesa, Raniero. *Beatitudes: Eight Steps to Happiness*. Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2009.

Hunsinger, George. *The Beatitudes*. Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2015.

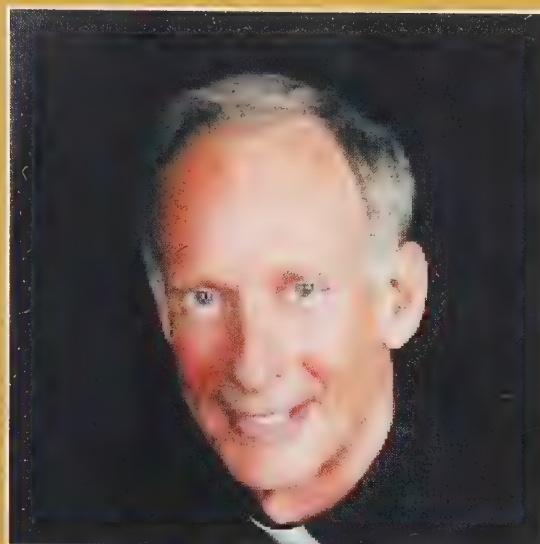
Pinckaers, Servais, O.P. *The Sources of Christian Ethics*. Washington DC: The Catholic University of American Press, 1995.

Tugwell, Simon. *The Beatitudes: Soundings in Christian Traditions*. Springfield: Templegate Publishers, 1980.

"The Beatitudes evolved from being inspiring sayings and became formative words to live by, a message to shape the values and agendas of individuals and communities."

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. The article emphasizes the flow of Beatitudes or blessings: having received gifts of God, we are challenged to pass them on to others. God often blesses us indirectly as we allow others to touch us by their gifts and needs. Think of times you have experienced the “flow” of blessings as giver or receiver.
2. The Beatitudes in both Matthew and Luke give special attention to persecuted Christians. How does the struggle of persecuted Christians throughout the world enter into my prayer? Do I believe that through their sacrifices our persecuted brothers and sisters are building up the Church throughout the world, perhaps even interceding for us?
3. Consider also the subtle ways religious persecution can be at work even in a culture that claims to give us freedom for worship – i.e. the lure of materialism, being indifferent to racism, harboring prejudice within my heart or being afraid to express my faith convictions.
4. Msgr. Zenz stressed several times in his article that the Beatitudes need to be read as a portrait of the Living Christ, the community; they describe qualities which every parish or religious community should embody. What Beatitudes radiate in our parish/community? What Beatitudes are not yet adequately highlighted and how might we make those beatitudes come to vibrant life among us?
5. Jesus seems to proclaim in the Beatitudes that any situation - even apparently painful or tragic things – can be a blessing; what makes the difference is our attitude of openness and our willingness to let go of control and place all our trust in God. Think of a time or circumstance when a suffering or tragedy became a spiritual blessing.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ordained July 1, 1978 for the Archdiocese of Detroit, Msgr. John Zenz received a Doctorate in Spirituality from the Gregorian University in Rome in 1984. He served in various capacities in the Archdiocese including Moderator of the Curia, Vicar General and Episcopal Vicar for one of the four Regions of the Archdiocese. Since 2008 he has been pastor of Holy Name Parish, Birmingham. He became Executive Editor of Human Development Magazine in May 2015.



BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT

Rev. Winnie Owens





THE POOR IN SPIRIT IN KENYA

Dear Reader: I am writing from Nairobi, Kenya, my home for the last three and a half years. I've just ministered at a local women's center called *Mwongozi* (meaning in Swahili "Home of Enlightenment" or "Wisdom"). My time here has allowed me to experience something of what Jesus means when He says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3). I am happy to reflect with you on its rich meaning. My experiences in this part of the world have brought new insight into this beatitude.

People on retreat, after praying with Scripture, in the circumstances of their lives, and the surrounding beauty of nature, share how God has moved there. They speak about a deeper awareness of His love for them, how He has challenged them to repentance and given them new courage, and then through His tender mercy has stirred deeper desires and hopes to serve Him however He wants. With the Holy Spirit I help them notice what God is saying and where He is leading them.

I recall particularly one Kenyan woman religious, in her early 50s, telling me about her family of origin. She is one of eleven children and the oldest daughter of a woman who is the second of her father's four wives. She related that there were times during her childhood and teens when her father and mother would gather the family for the evening rosary, in their house with its dirt floor and thatched roof. Well aware of the Gospel's stance on polygamy, at the same time she accepts the situation; she does not approve of it but is at peace with her parents' reality. Meanwhile she continues to live her vows of chastity, poverty and obedience as a woman religious. She has come to accept and live with this ambiguous situation, with its gifts and weaknesses, and to trust God working out the gift of salvation in and through it. I was moved by her spirit of surrender to God of that which is beyond her control and also by her commitment to love her parents and siblings as they are. She is one of God's special ones, poor in spirit, experiencing the blessings of the kingdom of heaven.

Another example: I live about five miles from a very large ghetto in the middle of Nairobi called Kibera. Some half million people live there in huts about 20 feet square. It is shocking to learn that they pay rent for such! Open sewers flow immediately outside many of these hovels; and little children often play next to this deplorable setting. Robberies, beatings, and drug dealings happen here sometimes. Many of these people left farms in rural Kenya and came to the big city with the hope of finding work but failed to do so. Often a grandparent lives with them, caring for children, or perhaps a teenager is acting as a parent for younger siblings. In almost every instance the parents died from the HIV virus or from cancer.

Winter can be quite cold, and the times of heavy rains create misery and disease, with mud and

mosquitoes everywhere. Such a scenario can be a formula for great discouragement and anger, for frustration that spawns violent outbursts, drug use, pre-marital sex, abortions and lots of single mothers. But I hear at times stories that reflect remarkable courage and heroic hope. A common element in these stories is the forming of prayer groups, often using *lectio divina*, to support each other and transcend the incredible challenges of living with integrity. Thanks to their deep faith, they experience the promise of God to show special care for the poor and have a taste of the kingdom of heaven in this life. I am reminded of the saying of Jesus, "It is your faith that has saved you."

One of the great success stories I have witnessed is the co-ed St. Aloysius Gonzaga High School built at the edge of Kibera. Teenage boys and girls come from that ghetto to St. Al's for four years of academics and for a further year of supervised 'field experience' in service to their own people. I have been in the classrooms of these young people and heard them speak with great gratitude for the donors who have funded the school and the cost of their tuition. In the course of those five years they discover a new appreciation of God's care in their lives, particularly how He provides for them through generous people. Being poor in spirit emerges as a key component of their young faith life, and with gratitude most go on to college or vocational school and frequently give back to their people.

Still another example: I am aware that Africa is a continent of more than 50 nations forever different because of Nelson Mandela, the great South African leader. His election as president of that nation came at the end of the racist apartheid government that had imprisoned him for nearly 30 years. What temptation there must have been for Mandela

"I hear at times stories that reflect remarkable courage and heroic hope. A common element in these stories is the forming of prayer groups, often using lectio divina, to support each other and transcend the incredible challenges of living with integrity."





and his administration to seek revenge against the former government and its followers! Instead, he and others insisted on making every effort at national reconciliation and healing, and therefore set up a commission to bring perpetrators of injustice, police especially, face to face with their victims and to facilitate forgiveness and compensation. The stories of justice and mercy realized there are legion, and what Mandela envisioned and implemented remains a model for the rest of the world, especially for Christians who profess to be disciples of Jesus. To entrust to God the work of ensuring justice and helping to bring forth reconciliation in this way, after decades of oppression along racial lines, was surely a courageous way of respecting God and God's reign and living out the spirit of the first beatitude. It was to work with God and not usurp what rightfully belongs to God.

Let us look now more deeply at the meaning of this first beatitude. What is Jesus saying to you and me who aspire to follow Him closely and be credible disciples? What exactly is the challenge of this beatitude and what is the opportunity it holds out for us? To explore this I will draw from the brilliant essay of Johannes Metz, *Poverty of Spirit*, and from Simon Tugwell's *The Beatitudes: Soundings in Christian Traditions*.

I find it helpful to understand that while the Ten Commandments deal with right behaviors, the eight beatitudes concern values and the attitudes that underlie these behaviors. They are eight different perspectives on Jesus, eight ways of relating, eight wisdom sayings on how to find peace, fulfillment and meaning. The first beatitude, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs" (Matthew 5:3), is the foundation of them all; the other seven express aspects and further implications of the first one. The first beatitude reflects the central disposition of the heart of Jesus and His close followers: a healthy dependence on God and a freedom to accept myself as loved and accepted by God for who I am, warts and all. I do not - and cannot - earn my relationship with God nor need I justify myself to God, to others, or to myself. My human reality is "the doorway through which we must pass to become authentic human beings" (Metz, p. 26), to become our true self and to be able to receive the gift of the kingdom of heaven. How all-important it is, then, to learn who we are, to keep growing in self-knowledge, and to accept the person we discover.

So, the challenge for me is to live with a certain basic peace about my life as it is here and now, while at the same time trusting in God's promise to fulfill someday my hopes for the fullness of His life realized within me. Aware of my limitations, shortcomings, and sins, I come to accept my family heritage with its strengths and weaknesses. I learn to depend on God, letting God take the lead each and every day.

I welcome Him shaping my life. I let go of trying to control my life and that of others: my spouse, my children, my fellow workers or students, my enemies, etc. I surrender my life and that of all others to my Divine Friend, abandoning myself and my plans into God's hands because I have come to have a deep faith in God as good and trustworthy. I believe in His loving providence for me and my loved ones, even for those I struggle to love or forgive. I see His hand, the kingdom of heaven, in my daily life and in those around me. The ground of my life is the conviction that I am part of a "we." Together, we experience, understand, and judge what to do next. We "consult" each other's desires; together we co-create. We are a team.

THE POVERTY OF THE HUMAN CONDITION

Metz challenges us to recognize and embrace the poverty of being truly human, with all its limitations and frustrations. When I accept joyfully my concrete circumstances, God's power and glory can become manifest, precisely in and through the way I deal with my weaknesses, vulnerability and failures. Indeed, in such moments, I am truly worshipping and glorifying God, letting His divine presence flow through me. (See II Corinthians 12:7-10)

Metz notes how we can sometimes experience ourselves as common and unnoticed, average among the many; or conversely, we can find ourselves to be different, exceptional, or even unique and so be outside the community. In this latter case the temptation can be to conform, to hide the truth, and fall in line with what everyone else is doing.

Then there is what I often see in Kenya: the misery of being chronically in great need, subject to "economic anxiety." Many live in large families where only one member can find employment and all the others depend on the income of that one. Begging, prostitution, and petty robbery become real temptations! People feel psychologically in chronic need, incomplete as a person, not to mention often being burdened with significant emotional struggles.

The young especially can be tempted to be impatient and distressed at the unpredictability of their future, while wanting security and losing their own sense of peace. Some, young and old, hide behind the past with its traditions and customs and pray to God with an anxiety about what they would like to control but cannot. Only a healthy relationship with a loving, reliable God can provide a realistic basis for trust and the inner freedom to let go of what has been a significant possession.

There is also the experience of finiteness and the loss of all other possibilities once a person commits to one possibility: This happens in the commitment of marriage, priesthood or religious life: all of these steps necessarily require a "letting go" of other attractive possibilities. And eventually we all discover our finiteness and loss of control as our bodies age and fail us. Accepting this part of our human reality is precisely what Christ did in the Incarnation: He was born into a specific culture and matured in a particular place and time. He became like us in all things but sin.

There is also the experience of seeing oneself as different and separate from everyone else. As persons experience the full mystery of their own uniqueness, we have the genuine possibility of understanding and accepting the unique gifts and challenges of others. Only those with a healthy sense of humility can listen selflessly and respect the other person, even if that other thinks and values differently. "Failing to risk poverty of encounter, we indulge in a new form of self-assertion and pay a price for it: loneliness." (Metz, p. 45)

Then there is the poverty of our death. All other expressions of our human condition and limitations are a prelude and preparation for this final poverty. Our destiny and personhood slip completely out of our hands. Metz says that submission to the forces of our own "death-bound nature become obedient self-abandonment to the Father, a total commitment to the full power of faith, hope and love." (Metz, p. 46)





Ironically, even in our attempts to accept our powerlessness, we still experience imperfection in our efforts. We feel this way because we are human, limited, and unable to re-make ourselves. We are utterly helpless without God taking us beyond ourselves. Only God can bring about our transformation in Christ. Till we die, concupiscence will affect us and make for our most acute temptation: namely, to flee these experiences of our poverty and fill them with some distraction, some false god of material wealth or prestige, self-centered pleasure or fleeting sense of power and control. Only when we admit our inadequate and imperfect responses to God do we discover His riches and power.

Very truly, we have to be pulled away from our strong temptations to possessiveness and our addiction to fix or provide for ourselves. "... The normal way in which we are weaned is by our being exposed to situations of mental, emotional, and spiritual deprivation." (Tugwell, p. 26) We have to let go of prior forms of security - even from God as

we have come to image and pray to Him - in order to encounter the true God of mystery. We will then be less prone to treat God as an object or possession and allow God to be God in all His infinity. Tugwell insists we have to be stripped of this spirit of possessiveness, to let go of our anxious self and learn how to receive, risk a deeper relationship with God, and come into the joy of being possessed by the gift of love and becoming more human, more authentic.

Our strength, then, is found in the weakness of God (I Cor 1:25). "God does not come into our world {like}. . . an omnipotent thug, to sort everything and everybody out . . . There is something about God which is better expressed in weakness than in strength, in foolishness than in wisdom, in poverty than in riches. The story . . . of Jesus . . . is a story of human failure, of human poverty, of foolishness. {This} is the revelation of God in human terms. . . we who are followers of Jesus Christ are called to be imitators of Him, and so should not be at all surprised to find out that one of the arts we have to learn is the art of {living from} weakness" (Tugwell,



p. 2). We start (and end) from a place of non-achievement, accepting our own poverty and humble condition, without trying to escape. Not trusting in any 'achievement' of our own is the pre-requisite disposition. As it was for Abraham, our father in faith, so too for us; we are justified by God's grace and not by our works. We are saved not by good works but to do good works.

We are called, then, to an attitude of gratitude, to live with a healthy sense of our need, depending on God to provide for us and appreciating how everything, every thing is gift. As Metz says, each of us needs to learn "to accept himself (or herself) as

someone who does not belong to himself (herself)" (Metz, p. 33), that strictly speaking we deserve nothing and merit nothing. Being poor in spirit is "the hidden component of every transcending act, the ground of every 'theological virtue'" (ibid., p. 47). It is manifest in a certain basic self-knowledge and humility or truthfulness about ourselves. This saving truth frees us to live in peace with our self as loved unconditionally by Abba Father. It gives us courage to let God be God in our daily living and refuse to let anything or anyone take His place. In that poverty, we are blessed!

Bibliography:

Metz, Johannes B. *Poverty of Spirit*. Newman Press, New York, NY, 1968.

Tugwell, Simon. *The Beatitudes: Soundings in Christian Traditions*. Templegate Publishers, Springfield, IL., 1980.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Quoting Johannes Metz, Fr. Owens notes that the human condition of itself is a state of poverty and unavoidable vulnerability; no one can totally shield himself/herself from pain, diminishment or death. Such poverty can become a blessing when embraced as a means to grow in intimacy with God. What is my present state of poverty? Am I embracing it?
2. Fr. Owens even suggests that embracing our weaknesses allows us to enter into God's own freely chosen weakness: we actually share the mystery of God's inner being. Contemplate the crucified Lord, reflecting on His poverty of spirit: all He can offer us is His own emptiness!
3. In one of the many story examples of life in Kenya, Father Owen speaks of a consecrated religious who finds her "poverty of spirit" as she lives with the ambiguity of her own parent's unusual marriage situation. Might "living with ambiguity" be a good description for poverty of spirit in your life?
4. How might our parish or community embody "poverty of spirit?" Through how we use resources? Through a prayerful spirit of quiet acceptance?



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Fr. Owen is a priest in the Archdiocese of New York. He is the author of several books, including *The Beatitudes: Soundings in Christian Traditions*, *The Eucharist: A Sacrament of Love*, and *The Eucharist: A Sacrament of Life*. He is also a frequent speaker at conferences and retreats. He is currently a member of the Society of the Sacred Word.



BLESSED ARE THEY WHO MOURN

Joyce Rupp, OSM

THE PROCESS OF GRIEVING

With a few sparse words Jesus offers hopeful assurance to those who grieve. When unwanted loss empties life of joy, there will be consolation. The word "grief" has its roots in the Latin, *gravare*, meaning "to burden or press heavily upon." While grief and mourning are often used interchangeably, mourning differs in that it consists of the period in which the mental, emotional, spiritual and physical responses of grief take over.

Besides extensive reading and research into various theories of grief, I have accompanied numerous persons who have mourned. Personal losses, however, have been my most pronounced teachers. I've experienced the death of loved ones, left behind cherished places and people, ended failed relationships, and let go of un-birthing dreams for religious and societal change. Amid these farewells I have felt the strongest grief from the physical death of those dear to my heart.

The morning that a beloved friend died suddenly from a brain aneurism I stood for a long time by my patio door, staring at the woods, tears blurring my view of the trees. I wondered how to live without the person who best knew my soul. I don't know how long I stood there but I clearly recall the assurance I eventually received. The words were unspoken, yet well-defined: "Stand in your sorrow. Nature will heal you."

I was sixty years old when that message sent me forth to plod through layers of heartache. Turning from the patio door I trusted my inner strength and the Holy One's presence to assist with the required mourning. I thought of what grief had taught me since my mid-twenties when sorrow first seared my life with the drowning of my twenty-three year old brother. Until that time I knew nothing of how unwanted loss can rob our marrow of gladness.

My brother's death led to a search for some sort of perspective to settle my discontent. After fifteen years of delving into grief I was still unable to release the sadness and questions about the "why" of his death. This liberation came only after making a thirty day Ignatian retreat during which I prayed scripture passages based on the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. At the end of that retreat I accepted, with peaceful conviction, how this spiral pattern of transformation resounds in every aspect of life — the chaos of the cosmos in the development of planets, the changing seasons of nature, the transformational process expressed in literary myths, the metamorphosis of butterflies, and countless other examples. Each reveals how growth occurs through a process that includes a significant "death" or yielding of what is valued.

Dr. Rachel Naomi Remen, author and professor at the Oster Center of Integrative Medicine, emphasizes that "Meaning does not change the particulars of our lives; it changes our experience of those particulars." Meaning came for me in recognizing the sequence of life-death-rebirth as the ongoing process of spiritual and psychological growth. This view has influenced my experience of loss ever since.

With each farewell of who and what is valued a "death" of some sort occurs before growth follows. It cannot be otherwise. Taking to heart the teaching Jesus gave - "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain, but if it dies, it bears much fruit." (Jn12:24) I see that mystery at work in every unwelcomed goodbye. Each significant letting-go mirrors a wheat seed in the ground, each treasure slipping out of my tight grip detaches in order to open to a silent birthing in grief's dark crucible. Out of that seed of seeming defeat will evolve some new dimension of life, the "fruit" of which cannot be identified until the pain has been tended. As I look back now, I see that each "death" I encountered has nurtured compassion, expanded empathy, lessened judgmented thoughts, strengthened hope and kindled greater kindness. This has been my "blessedness," the consolation found in mourning after tears fell upon the buried seed.

WHAT GRIEF HAS TAUGHT ME

Library shelves are filled with helpful resources on grief. While I find many of their common elements to exist in my experience and in others, some bear special mention.

(1) No two persons grieve in the same way. Individual mourning does not fit neatly into the theories, patterns and stages. At the same time, knowledge about the common elements can reassure the griever that he or she is not "going crazy" and is, in fact, experiencing natural responses. The definition of "bereaved" is "to be robbed." The intensity of emotions and mental anguish varies but invasive loss often feels like being stripped or raided of a priceless

"Meaning does not change the particulars of our lives;
it changes our experience of those particulars."

treasure. One day I gathered into the following poem a description of those pillaging characteristics:

Grief has come to my house/ entered without invitation, / banged on my locked door, slashed the tightly fitted screens, / smashed in the durable windows. / She sits now in my heart's best chair, / staring at me with bleeding eyes, / cobwebs of sorrow in her hair, clumps of sadness on her sour breath.

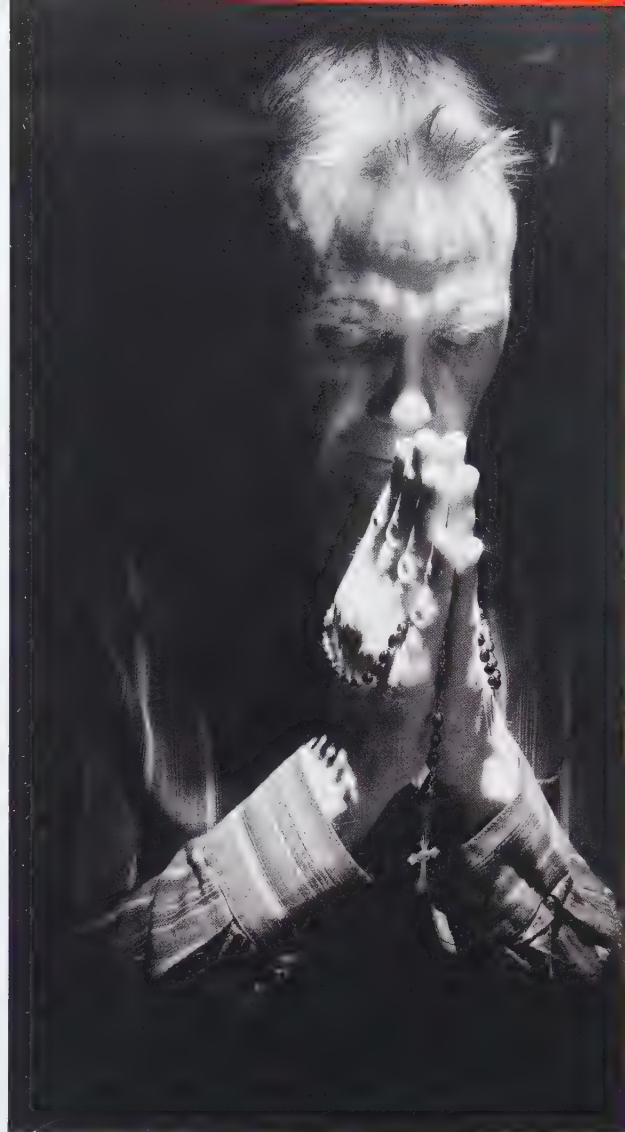
Grief, my unwelcome visitor, / demands constant attention, / cleans out my well-stocked pantry, / gobbles up my daily energy / and refuses to give me any sign / of imminent departure.

I have unlocked the door now / but she never goes near it. / In spite of listening to her endless pain / and brushing away her constant tears / she still clings insistently to me and refuses to walk out of my life. / What more does she expect of me, / Surely not my friendship? (My Soul Feels Lean)

There are some farewells in which positive responses arise. Instead of sadness, there may be relief from constant care-giving, a release of burdens after losing a job that was leading to mental and physical ill-health, or a sense of peace and acceptance after making a difficult physical move or ending a traumatic relationship.

(2) *Grief needs tending*. Resistance to heartache is understandable. Yet, grief requires attentiveness. Celtic poet and theologian John O'Donohue wisely noted, "...the strange thing is: the more you resist (suffering), the longer it stays. The more intensely you endeavor to depart the ground of pain, the more firmly you remain fixed there." (*Eternal Echoes*) Allowing the mourning period to be a time of healing is not something Western culture encourages. Quite the opposite. The implied message to those who grieve is: "Run from your sadness. Pretend everything is fine. Don't think about it. Find distractions. Hurry up and be happy again."

If we want to heal we cannot ignore the sorrow in our soul. Years ago I attempted to do so. Each time I tried to write a book about my mother's grace-filled



approach to aging and dying a rush of tears came and I set the plan aside. Ten years went by before I finally let myself enter into untended regrets about what I did or did not do during the final years of my mother's life. Only then was I able to write.

Sometimes people need to turn away from difficult loss in order to survive emotionally. Grief can be too much to bear or the demanding necessities of life entail immediate responsibility. Paramedics and first responders, sexually abused persons, PTSD casualties and other grief-laden individuals often set their hurt aside until they are able to tend it.

(3) *There is always more to learn about grief*. Coming across Francis Weller's portrayal of "ancestral grief" in *The Wild Edge of Sorrow* helped me lay to rest a persistent angst. Weller describes this grief as the type "we carry in our bodies from sorrows



experienced by our ancestors.” My grandmother hemorrhaged to death giving birth to a thirteenth child. As the oldest daughter of eleven remaining children, my mother immediately took over the household and never had time or opportunity to mourn. Whenever Mom spoke of her mother’s death she did not emote sadness. Yet, I felt a huge tug of tears in my chest and did not understand this strong response. When I read Weller’s description I recognized the inheritance of my mother’s grief and was finally able to release it.

(4) *Healing requires letting-go.* The dictionary definition of surrender is “to cease resistance, to give up, to hand over.” Cynthia Bourgeault notes that “surrender is an act of spiritual power because it opens the heart directly to the more subtle realms of spiritual Wisdom and energy.” (*The Wisdom Way of Knowing*) Surrender implies vulnerability. Engaging in meaningful rituals, joining a support group, seeking a therapist, talking with a pastor or other spiritual guide — any of these movements toward healing necessitate trust and openness in order to gradually yield the tight grip on what is no longer possible.

Letting-go opens the door of our psyche and ushers us toward the fresh air of a new beginning. Each surrender to the impact of loss, every yielding to what cannot be undone, prepares for the final surrender that comes with our physical death. We learn how to do this with each successive, prized part of life that we hand over when we grieve.

(5) *Grief never fully departs.* A disturbing aspect of mourning comes when we think we are through with grief and then find ourselves back in it. Shards of sorrow are bound to surface, much like a piece of a broken jug in an archeological dig. This can be disheartening (“I thought I was finally moving on.”), but gradually peace and pleasure do return to stay. There will always be a suture on the ripped net of our heart and a noticeable scar on our memory. Life will not look as it did in the past, but we are capable of regaining contentment.

(6) *Focus on Resilience.* There is a movement in grief counseling today toward an emphasis on resilience rather than on the griever’s emotional and mental situation. If a belief in our interior strength exists then we can approach grief with confidence in our ability to move through it. Trusting in resilience makes a huge difference. In my mid-thirties I struggled doggedly with a valued relationship that was obviously dying. Sitting with a friend one day I repeated my woes to her as I had often done in previous conversations. She listened attentively and then commented, “You have a lot more inner strength than you realize.” Her brief affirmation initiated the healing process.

(7) *There Are Spiritual Lessons in Loss.* To hurry ourselves or others through mourning creates a disservice because grief can be a powerful catalyst for personal growth. Benedictine author, Joan Chittister, sums up the value of loss in *The Story of Ruth*: “There are spiritual lessons to be learned from loss that can be barely divined by any other means and often despite ourselves. We learn, just when we think we have nothing, just when it feels that we have not one good thing left in the world, that what we do still have is ourselves... We have gifts of God in abundance, never noticed, never touched, perhaps, but a breath in us nevertheless and waiting to be tapped....”

DISCOVERING CONSOLATION

Those gifts have been tapped from within my grief when I’ve allowed myself to be companioned by the Good Shepherd “through the valley of darkness.” (Psalm 23) Time and again I have found solace in the Compassionate One’s promise to comfort those who mourn. When most weak, I relied on this Inner Strength. When deeply forlorn, I felt embraced. When all hope of recovery seemed lost, it came again in surprising affirmations strewn in nature, people, and prayer. Through the hills and valleys associated with grief and mourning I have learned that much may be lost, but much can also be found.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Joyce Rupp is an international presenter, retreat leader and spiritual director. She was a volunteer for Hospice for fifteen years and co-founded The Institute of Compassionate Presence. She currently serves as co-director and teacher for the Institute. Her almost two dozen publications include the following books that focus on aspects of grief: *Praying Our Goodbyes*, *May I Walk You Home*, *Now That You've Gone Home*, *My Soul Feels Lean*, and *Fly While You Still Have Wings*.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Sr. Joyce Rupp eloquently and poetically takes us through her own experiences of grief and loss – a soul-mate's sudden death, the drowning of her 23-year-old brother and her mother's slow farewell. In each of these goodbyes she needed time to allow for healing and consolation to emerge gradually. Have I noticed that same challenge in my experiences of loss, separation or death?
2. One of the lessons she learned was that just when she hit "rock bottom" and felt most spent, she discovered she still had herself; from that point transformation could dawn. Have I ever hit "rock bottom?" What did I discover about myself and God in that radical emptiness?
3. Sr. Rupp speaks of "inherited grief" and how her own mother's unresolved grief needed to heal through Joyce's experience of mourning for her mother over many years. What does that insight say about how we might help others find consolation as they deal with inter-generational grief and loss?
4. How does our community accompany those who are grieving?

MEN'S AND WOMEN'S ADDICTION TREATMENT PROGRAMS, INTERVENTIONS, EDUCATION AND CONTINUING CARE

The men's and women's programs at Guest House are uniquely Catholic and provide the spiritual environment for effective clinical treatment of addiction and other behavioral health conditions for priests, deacons, seminarians, and men and women religious, leading to quality recovery and overall health and wellness.

For more information on treatment programs, intervention, education or continuing care, visit GuestHouse.org or call 800-626-6910

Joe Shoots, MA, LLP, CAADC
Executive Director
Men's Treatment Program
jshoots@guesthouse.org

Mary Ellen Merrick, IHM, D. Min., MAC
Executive Director
Women's Treatment Program
memerrick@guesthouse.org



Individualized Treatment and Compassionate Care
1601 Joslyn Road
Lake Orion, MI 48360
GuestHouse.org
248-391-4445
800-626-6910



BLESSED ARE THE MEEK

Rev. Justin Kelly, S.J.



**“Blessed are the meek, for
they shall inherit the earth”**

(Matthew 5:5)

Meekness is not, to put it mildly, a quality our society applauds. However the Greek word *praeis* is translated—“gentle” and “lowly” are sometimes offered as alternatives—the kind of self-effacement or passivity it suggests goes against our cultural grain. We favor asserting yourself, “knowing your rights,” a proactive response to life. If a situation is not to your liking, make something happen to change it. Accepting the given is cowardly; life is a battle, and those who fight hardest win. Make noise and you will be noticed. Granting all that has changed since Jesus’ lifetime, it was probably not all that different in his world. Yet he declared the meek fortunate or “blessed,” as well as others—the poor, those who mourn, the pure of heart, the persecuted—whom his culture regarded as losers. As Marcel Legaut wrote, “these are values not quoted on today’s markets.” In short, if you want to be countercultural, being meek is a good way to start.

TRUE MEEKNESS: HUMILITY AND TRUTHFULNESS

What does it mean to be meek—or, better, what is the meekness that Jesus praises? It is easier to say what it does not mean than what it does mean! It emphatically does not mean “Be a door-mat.” It does not mean failing to stand up for oneself and what one believes. “My courage always rises with every attempt to intimidate me” says Elizabeth Bennet, the heroine of Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*. Our courage should rise as well—all the more when we are defending not just ourselves but the disadvantaged, the poor, the victims of abuse. But, equally, meekness does not mean the opposite—arrogant self-assertion, insulting one’s opponents, trumpeting one’s virtues, attacking one’s critics, demanding to be recognized.

Meekness involves a blend of humility and trustfulness. Humility, in the sense of a comfortable acceptance of one’s strengths and weaknesses, all that one is (and is not, but would like to be), one’s real but limited power. “Humility is truth,” according to a classic saying. Trust in having a faith-inspired confidence that God will accomplish what one cannot bring about by one-self—the full realization of God’s kingdom of justice and peace—and that patient working with the given situation will accomplish what force and bluster cannot. It means trusting that the One who “looks on the lowly in their nothingness” will lift them up and do great things for them.

THE GENTLE STRENGTH OF JESUS

The meek are precisely those who recognize and accept their own relative powerlessness, yet rely on

God’s power and will to fulfill his loving intentions through them. In this they are like the “poor in spirit” of the first beatitude, and some scholars see “blessed are the meek” as a Matthean gloss on the former, bringing out a further dimension of its meaning. So too it is in Matthew’s gospel that Jesus calls himself “meek and humble of heart,” assuring those who come to him that they will find rest for their souls (Matthew 11:29). In the meditation on Two Standards in the Spiritual Exercises, St. Ignatius suggests picturing Christ “standing in a lowly place in a plain about Jerusalem, his appearance beautiful and attractive,” choosing many disciples to spread his saving message to everyone “no matter what their state or condition.” Satan, in contrast, is “seated on a great throne of fire and smoke,” his appearance inspiring horror and terror as he dispatches demons to create havoc and ensnare sinners. On the one side, a gentle and welcoming humanness desiring to spread good everywhere; on the other, noise and fury aiming only at self-aggrandizement and violence. Jesus is similarly pictured in John’s gospel declaring that “whoever comes to me I will never cast out” (John 6:37). An early Christian hymn quoted by Paul in Philippians emphasizes the humility of Christ: though divine by nature, he did not claim his own equality with God but accepted totally the human condition, including an agonizing and ignominious death. And this self-emptying, says the hymn, is the very reason why God the Father raises him on high, and gives him the name above all other names—God’s own name, Kyrios, Lord (Phil. 2: 6-11).

In some ways this image of the meek and gentle Jesus seems at variance with the way the gospels

“Meekness involves a blend of humility and trustfulness. Humility, in the sense of a comfortable acceptance of one’s strengths and weaknesses, all that one is (and is not, but would like to be), one’s real but limited power.”



portray him elsewhere. He frequently reproaches his disciples for their lack of faith, their literal-mindedness, and their ambition; he excoriates the Pharisees for their hypocrisy and self-righteousness, their lack of compassion, their shunning of those outside the Law. Jesus' role as teacher and prophet required forceful clarity and directness in shaping His new community, and in bearing witness to the way of God without regard for the favor of those in power. In contrast to a modern politician, he was unconcerned about his image or the need to be liked. Yet Jesus was famously silent when arrested and brought to trial, to the amazement of Pontius Pilate, the Roman procurator: "Have you nothing to say? See how many charges they are bringing against you" (Mark 15:4). His confidence in Yahweh was such that he did not need to defend himself: he knew from whom his vindication would come. "Jesus is remembered as one who absorbed and did not transmit violence," said Rowan Williams, former archbishop of Canterbury. It is his meekness here, in keeping with his teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, that inspired the non-violent politics

of liberating reformers like Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr.

"Not to exercise all the power at one's disposal. . . is contrary to all the laws of nature. Grace alone can do it," observed the Jewish-Christian mystic Simone Weil. When attacked, few of us can resist the temptation to strike back. Events in the public sphere, particularly conflicts over politics and religion, can test the meekness even of normally modest people. The partisan animosity of the 2016 presidential election campaign left a legacy of bitterness and rancor that seems unlikely to dissipate anytime soon. Many on the losing side find themselves dealing not just with normal disappointment, but with feelings of intense anguish and anger. For them truth and justice, not merely politics, is at issue. They fear the likely consequences of the new presidency for immigrants, minorities, those recently insured by the Affordable Care Act, Medicare recipients, and the environment, among others. These are matters of such gravity and moral consequence that tolerant acceptance seems



impossible and wrong. How does one practice “meekness” when matters of principle and justice are at stake?

RECOGNIZING OUR OWN BIASES

Intellectually at least, it is helpful to remind oneself of the limitations of one’s own viewpoint. Mark Leary’s 2004 book *The Curse of the Self* describes the “egocentric bias” that we all possess. Most people, he notes, go through the world assuming that they perceive themselves and the world accurately. While we admit to sometimes being fooled by optical illusions or misjudging someone’s character, we mostly regard these as “atypical errors against a broad backdrop of general accuracy.” But in fact our perceptions are often distorted in ways we cannot detect. Studies have shown that people overestimate how common their own reactions and attitudes are in the general population (the “false consensus” effect). We assume that other objective and fair-minded people (like ourselves!) will see the world the way we do and reach the same conclusions. “When other people disagree with us, we naturally think that they are deluded, ignorant, or biased.” We attribute

their erroneous views to an intellectual or moral defect that keeps them from seeing things as they really are—that is, the way we see them.

I confess that I am frequently guilty of all these biases, and it is helpful to remind myself, or to be reminded, of my own mental and emotional limitations. (Leary himself says that the most important thing he learned in college was to doubt the infallibility of his own judgments.) In the abstract, I know that other people also believe themselves to be reasonable and fair, and they may indeed have access to truths that escape my own awareness. Everyone’s perspective is inevitably partial and incomplete, and we can learn what we do not know by listening patiently and open-mindedly to those who differ from us. But this general truth, which we can accept with relative ease in matters we care little about, runs aground in those cases where we have a heavy emotional investment. The more we care, the less are we able to take a detached view.

Something similar holds true about the religious divide in the Catholic Church, without there being presently a crisis of comparable intensity.

Conservative Catholics who found the papacies of John Paul II and Benedict XVI reassuring after the revolutionary changes initiated by Vatican II, are uneasy with Pope Francis' more relaxed and open approach to matters such as the readmission to communion of divorced and remarried Catholics and some questions of sexual morality (like his famous "Who am I to judge?" in regard to a homosexual priest). Those who associate their Catholicism with fighting the culture wars valiantly and uncompromisingly are baffled and unhappy with Church leaders whose priorities lie elsewhere, in promoting mercy and social justice and safeguarding the environment. Progressive Catholics are no less committed to the values of the current Pope, pointing to the teaching and example of Jesus in the gospels. Compromise between these opposing viewpoints may not be impossible, but it is difficult. What does meekness require in such a situation?

As Dale Carnegie noted in *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, frontal attacks on people with opposing views just solidifies them in their contrary opinions; it serves no purpose but to intensify hostile feelings. He cites Buddha as saying, "Hatred is never ended by hatred but by love." One must first of all struggle to attain a tranquil spirit through prayer and meditation. Some seek inner peace in the knowledge of God's love for all people, including our nation. On that basis a seemingly intolerable situation can be dealt with calmly and non-violently. "Know that I am with you all days, even till the end of time" Jesus tells his disciples as he ascends (Matthew 28:20). I return often to the words spoken to Juliana of Norwich in her *Revelations of Divine Love*: "All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well." The Lord will do it (Isaiah 55:10-11).

A tranquil spirit, once attained, helps discern creative ways to respond to evil situations, and deal with conflicts within the community of faith. As Karl Rahner observed, it is simply not possible that we Christians always be as one, or that the Church could or should impose an obligatory norm on everyone about everything. We disagree among ourselves,

and nothing may be left for us "but to fight against one another with whatever lawful weapons God has given the human spirit." But, he says, it makes a great deal of difference how we conduct those battles, and patience, mutual respect, and a readiness to listen and to give the benefit of the doubt to those with whom we disagree, are indispensable parts of it. Faith in God and in God's presence even in our adversaries is called for; this requires, as Rahner says, "a dying which engenders life." That dying or self-emptying is the price of meekness.

GENUINE LISTENING

Unnatural (or supernatural) as this self-restraint may be, it has striking parallels with the principle of *wu wei* advocated by Chinese Taoist philosophy. *Wu wei* (pronounced ooh-way) means "actionless action" or "doing by not doing." It describes an attitude that is more responsive than assertive: it attends tranquilly to whatever is going on, and allows its energy to flow through, bending it gently in a positive direction. Instead of taking the bull by the horns, it allows the bull to make the first move, and (carefully avoiding the horns) lets its charge dissipate gradually until a calmer state is achieved. It is not passive, but supremely active: "The way to do is to be." It advocates listening before talking, and allowing the interests of others to direct the flow of conversation. It opens a space which people may safely enter. Like water, it appears shapeless and powerless, yet in time it can wear away rock.

Taoism's central principle expressed in Lao Tzu's classic *Tao Te Ching* (The Way and Its Power) is that of paying quiet attention to the underlying harmony of natural forces, a "Way" that is beyond verbal or conceptual expression: "He who speaks [about the Way] does not know; he who knows does not speak." It fosters a contemplative attitude that is alert to subterranean tenors that a more dominating, aggressive manner is likely to miss. It does not impose; it listens and responds accordingly. This approach has much in common with the psychotherapist's "listening with the third ear," and is often recommended for its social and psychological

benefits. As a priest, I have found it extremely helpful in pastoral situations, and particularly in spiritual direction. The experience of fifty years convinces me that most people need, even more than advice, simply to be listened to and understood. "You have no idea how life-giving that is," a sister with a PhD and a world-class reputation in her field told me long ago.

Carl Rogers' classic *On Becoming a Person* says that one significant thing his career as a therapist taught him was that it was enriching simply to open channels of communication whereby others could express their feelings and intimate perceptions to him. "The more I am open to the realities in me and in the other person, the less do I find myself wanting to rush in to 'fix things.'" Paradoxically, the more his clients felt accepted non-judgmentally, the more personal change came about. The gospel story of Jesus and Zaccheus the tax-collector illustrates this principle. Instead of telling Zaccheus what he ought to do, Jesus simply invites himself to his home, leaving it up to the latter to offer to make restitution for any unjust gains and to give half his wealth to the poor, which indeed he does (Luke 19:8). This shows "meekness" in action, and is clearly connected to patience which waits for the spirit to move people from within.

Something like this holds in personal relationships too. Psychologist Daniel McAdams found that among romantic partners, the happiest were those adept at letting a relationship grow naturally, without forcing it or trying to make something happen. These people, he noted, had a kind of "positive passivity," waiting for something to emerge when and if it will. "The capacity for relinquishing control is a key to the ability to love," he says. It is the essence of faith as well. This involves the paradox of "trying not to

try" instead of trying too hard. Such patience implies respect for the powers immanent in nature and in people, and for the action of the Spirit of God. It also requires a kind of self-emptying like the kenosis of Christ in the passage cited above. One holds back or stands aside to let others be.

WHY THE MEEK INHERIT THE EARTH

This can be difficult, and I frequently fail at it. Yet as I tell my students in the world religions course I teach every semester, "this is different from a lot of the good advice I preach about; this actually works." When practiced it often produces a harmony between oneself and other people that can be quite wonderful. Is this the reason why "the meek shall possess the earth"? Instead of being possessed by their own self-centered wishes and needs, they find themselves in a right relationship to the rest of creation—both giving and receiving. Like the self-emptying God who "lets us be," limiting his unlimited power out of respect for the autonomy of his own creatures, we treat the people and even the natural order with delicacy and respect, rather than ruthlessly exploiting it for our own benefit.

Thus "blessed are the meek" has ecological implications like those expressed in Pope Francis's encyclical *Laudato Si*, which asks us to let God's creation flourish—to behave with sensitivity to the existence and needs of creatures other than ourselves. Only so will we and our descendants inherit an Earth worth living in—one far richer than the species-denuded and much-depleted world we are now at severe risk of leaving behind us. "I have come that they may have life, and have it more abundantly," declares the Johannine Jesus (John 10:10). The practice of meekness in imitation of Him is no small part of the way to that more abundant life.

"Is this the reason why 'the meek shall possess the earth'? Instead of being possessed by their own self-centered wishes and needs, they find themselves in a right relationship to the rest of creation—both giving and receiving."

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Again and again, Fr. Kelly makes the point that “meekness” in the Scriptures and in our theological tradition is different from how the dominant social voices would define it. True meekness is humble and open-ended, a work-in-progress; by its very nature it does not lay absolute claim to any opinion. It is docile, ready to learn and willing to be changed. On what aspect of meekness do I need to focus? (For example, better listening? Less judgmental? More tentative in my assertions? More patient with myself and others?)
2. Fr. Kelly suggests that the meek “inherit the earth” because they are not “possessed” by their own wishes or needs. Self-effacing, they want all people and even the good earth to flourish. Do I see the connection between meekness and ecology?
3. Since Beatitudes should be read as describing a community, try to envision qualities of a “community of the meek.”
4. Fr. Kelly sub-titled his article – “The power of the apparently powerless.” Think of examples of people who are apparently powerless but yet have made a tremendous difference.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

A native of Cleveland, Fr. Kelly entered the Jesuits out of high school and was ordained by Detroit Archbishop (later Cardinal) John Dearden in 1966. After finishing his Ph.D. studies in English literature at Yale, Fr. Kelly came to the University of Detroit in 1972, joining the Religious Studies Department three years later. He has published a number of articles in *The Way*, a British Jesuit journal of spirituality, and elsewhere. He has taught theology and has offered numerous seminars in theology and spirituality. Fr. Kelly is a longtime member of the Catholic Theological Society of America, the American Academy of Religions, and the Jane Austen Society of North America.



IUST

BLESSED ARE THOSE HUNGERING
AND THIRSTING FOR JUSTICE

Rev. Victor Clore, PhD



FOCUS ON JUSTICE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS

In the Bible, *justice* and *righteousness* are nearly interchangeable, but have a range of meanings.

Let justice roll down like water, and
righteousness flow like an endless stream.
(Amos 5:24)

The Lord will lay out a new city with
a line of justice and a plumb-bob of
righteousness. (Isa 28:16)

You shall be called City of Saving Justice.
(Isa 1:26)

God has displayed his holiness in justice.
(Isa 5:16)

The stock of Jesse: judging the poor with
integrity, wearing a belt of *uprightness*. (Isa
11:1-5)

Both words, and their several cognates,
imply the profound goodness, truth and
mercy of God, *enacted* on our behalf.
Spend a few moments imagining your
home, your neighborhood, your work,
our world, saturated with righteous
justice.

Hunger is more than a slight gnawing that lets you know is it almost lunchtime. Real hunger drives refugees to gather up their children into a rickety fishing boat, attempting to cross the Mediterranean at the risk of drowning. Thirst is more than the casual urge to stretch your legs and visit the water cooler. It is a compelling urgency, such as the need for respect that African Americans feel while driving on the public roads. Spend a few moments summoning up a yearning so powerful that it moves you, right now, to try to satisfy that hunger or slake that thirst.

Hunger and thirst for justice describe Jesus to a T. Jesus proclaimed the imminent coming of God's Reign: we **shall** be satisfied, no doubt about it. The beatitudes declare a revolution. But Jesus also insisted that the Kingdom of God is already among us. His thirst for justice was occasionally quenched by healing a blind man, or lifting up a woman bent over. So in our own day, while we hunger for the fulfillment of God's Kingdom, we can respond to our thirst for justice in practical ways here and now – with the same urgency and passion that Jesus had.

GEORGETOWN PLANTATION PROJECT

Hunger for justice sometimes grows slowly from subtle discomfort into famished urgency. For several decades scholars have been publishing articles and books on the history of Georgetown University. In the early years, the University depended on the profit from its agricultural plantations in Maryland, worked by slaves. In the early nineteenth century President Thomas F. Mulledy, S.J. authorized the sale of 272 enslaved people on the plantations. They were relocated as slaves in Louisiana.

In the summer of 2015, racial protests were roiling college campuses, which instigated an unusual collection of Georgetown professors, students, alumni and genealogists determined to find out what happened to those 272 men, women and children. The students organized a protest and a sit-in. Georgetown's current President DeGioia convened the Working Group on Slavery, Memory, and Reconciliation. Their charge was to recommend how to acknowledge Georgetown's history with slavery, to examine named sites on the campus (e.g., the Mulledy and McSherry buildings), and to convene opportunities for dialogue. In November, the university agreed to remove the names of Thomas F. Mulledy and William McSherry from two campus buildings.

Meanwhile a white alumnus could not stop thinking about the slaves. His hunger began growing. He organized an effort to convince the University to trace the lives of these slaves and to compensate their progeny. He has been helping people in Louisiana to make the connections between their current family tree and the 272 men, women and children who had been sold from the Jesuits' Maryland Plantations. For example, "Uncle Neely" who died in Louisiana in 1901, turned out to have been baptized Cornelius as an infant at a Catholic church in the State of Maryland. Bingo! The university is still working out the specifics of its reconciliation process. The hunger for justice has been growling for years, and is now beginning to be satisfied.

ABOLITION OF THE DEATH PENALTY

Michigan was the first state to abolish the death penalty in 1846, but thirty states still practice it. The Illinois Coalition Against the Death Penalty (ICADP) was hungry. Hundreds of thirsty public defenders, pro bono lawyers, journalists, academics, and assorted activists devoted tens of thousands of hours, for more

than thirty years, to abolish the death penalty in Illinois. They focused on public education, established a speakers' bureau, organized letter-writing campaigns, and convened public forums. Their most convincing work was to re-examine, and challenge, the evidence against several Death Row prisoners. They demonstrated beyond a reasonable doubt that many of them were innocent.

Their hunger was satisfied when Governor Quinn ended capital punishment in Illinois on March 9, 2011, "since our experience has shown that there is no way to design a perfect death penalty system, free from the numerous flaws that can lead to wrongful convictions or discriminatory treatment." However, hunger pangs to abolish the death penalty remain in much of the nation.

BLUE-ON-BLACK MISTRUST

Every responsible person is distressed over the recent episodes of police officers in threatening or ambiguous situations who appear to overreact, killing citizens who are innocent, or at least who are not deserving of instant execution. In our response to this crisis, we must keep in mind the difference between justice and anger. Anger is a natural human emotion that calls our attention to injustice, and it may accompany our response to injustice. The classic example is Jesus cleansing the temple. But when our motivation to bring about justice is confounded with anger, trust evaporates and our protest boils up into out-of-control violence. Currently we are starving in a famine of Blue-on-Black mistrust.

In the demonstrations over police shootings, when faith leaders get visibly and actively involved, there is usually less violent spillover in the streets. When a community has been hungry *over the long haul* to create a more just social order (as in Tulsa, Oklahoma), there is

more trust and a network of communication already in place. City leaders can act quickly and transparently, and the citizens tend to react more responsibly. People are more likely to give the police officer the benefit of the doubt when there is true doubt, but also to lay charges when there is panic or irresponsible carelessness.

The only way to satisfy hunger for racial justice and interracial trust is honest dialogue, to genuinely listen to the experience of others. Justice presumes that police officers choose their profession to serve and to protect the community, intending to don uniforms of *integrity*, with *uprightness* as their belt. At the same time, ask any African American male in your acquaintance about his experiences of "Driving While Black." No one was found guilty when Freddie Gray died after a "rough ride" in a police van, but rough rides in police vans must stop. Religious congregations have an essential role in laying out a new City of Saving Justice, with the line of justice and the plumb-bob of righteousness.

INCLUSION

Our parish is hungry for *inclusion*. It is a matter of justice to make sure that everyone is welcome in the church. We established an "Inclusion Committee," but then realized that we cannot allow inclusion to be just another committee doing the work of a few dedicated souls who happen to be hungry for it. We elevated the group to the level of a *Commission* of the parish pastoral council. The Inclusion Commission nudges all of us, in whatever we do, at worship, in religious education, in service, in administration, to stay hungry for eliminating the subtle barriers that separate people.

Our parish is in a predominantly African American community, so we began by thinking

of ways to help the local population really believe that the Catholic Church is not a White church. We found that slaking our thirst for inclusion is not as simple as drawing a glass of water. In regard to race relations, for example, we have four distinct groups of parishioners. There are White members who have genuinely tried to become a welcoming church home; they do not feel that we need to be constantly agitating and stirring up more guilt. And there are Black members who are happy to have found a welcoming church home here; they also do not feel that we need to be constantly agitating and stirring up more guilt. And then there are Black members who feel that we have hardly scratched the surface, acting simply out of guilt; justice demands that we get much more assertive and overt about our need to change. And there are White members who feel that we have hardly scratched the surface, acting simply out of guilt; justice demands that we get much more assertive and overt about our need to change.

Each of these groups has valid experiences, yet each of the four is uniquely different from the other three, which keeps the dialogue cooking. These experiences generate insights, but insights come a dime a dozen. Forming reasonable judgments and deciding on responsible actions is a daunting challenge. Even the Inclusion Commission itself starts scratching its head. Here again, hunger must transcend anger, and it must go deeper than merely soothing anxiety.

The Inclusion Commission began to identify many other excluded populations. Single people think that the Catholic Church is only concerned about families with children. Newer members are not sure that their opinions do actually count. (We noted how often people say, “We’ve tried that before.”) People who live in the poorer neighborhoods think the Catholic

Church is a rich church. All the mainline Christian denominations are starving for lack of young adults. We need to welcome (not just tolerate) disabled persons living in local community-based housing, even if they have not bathed recently, or speak nonsense.

Of course, Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Trans and Questioning persons are certain that they do not belong to the Church. They have been hearing us call them “intrinsically disordered” all of their lives. Parents of LGBTQ children are very hungry. One of our parishioners has written a book about their family’s struggle to remain faithful to their conscience, the Gospel, and their Church, even though their church condemns their child. One way we support the LGBTQ community is to offer hospitality to *Fortunate Families* for their monthly meetings and an annual retreat. One year we had to move the venue to a non-parish site because the speaker was not on the diocesan approved list. And, as might be expected, a few parishioners have left because they simply cannot support “immoral” behavior.

Our parish still operates a Catholic school – one of the few left in the city. It is open to all the families in the community, regardless of religion. A good education is the single most important step out of poverty; a Catholic school is the most effective contribution the Church can make toward resolving recurring poverty. We charge tuition on a sliding scale, depending on household income. The average tuition actually paid is only about one-quarter of the actual cost per student. We depend on the broader community to subsidize the remaining cost. But we continue to support the school, thirsting for the holiness of God.

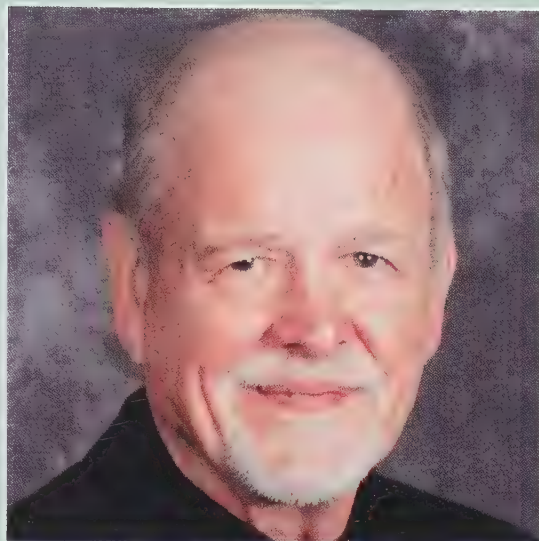
The Avett Brothers have a new song called True Sadness. One stanza goes: “Just know the kingdom of God is within you, even though the battle is bound to continue.” The battle

for inclusion does continue, and we are still hungry. But as Jesus warned: Once you set your hand to the plow, if you look back you are not worthy of the Kingdom of God.

In all these examples, there is often a prophet or two, but prophets cannot enact justice alone by sheer determination. Many people must mobilize into a movement. This is the calling of the Church – hungry to be a movement for justice and righteousness, fulfilling the Scriptures, and “doing this in memory of me.”

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Writing from his experience as a pastor for many decades at an urban parish, Fr. Clore expressed the hunger and thirst for righteousness and justice that characterizes his community as a whole. While there are disagreements regarding how to be more inclusive, the community truly shares a common passion: they embody this Beatitude. How might our parish/community do the same?
2. The words “hunger and thirst” have a Eucharistic ring to them; they parallel the terms righteousness and justice. Do I personally see the direct connection of Eucharistic prayer and committed action on behalf of justice? How might our parish more explicitly highlight this connection?
3. The Beatitude promises eventual “satisfaction” of hunger and thirst, yet we know the work for justice and peace is unending. Can the “satisfaction” come in knowing we are “in process” and taking small steps forward?



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Victor Clore, S.C.L., Ph.D., has been a parish priest in the Archdiocese of Detroit since ordination in December 1963. He holds advanced degrees in systematic theology from the Congregational University of Irvine, and in clinical and developmental psychology from Wayne State University in Detroit. His specializations are urban pastoral practice, spiritual direction, Scripture-based preaching, and psychology of faith development. He is currently Pastor of Christ the King Parish, Detroit, MI.



BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL

Annemarie S. Kidder



ETTY HILLESUM: THE EMBODIMENT OF MERCY

In recent years, a young Jewish woman from the Netherlands has gained worldwide acclaim for her writings. Considered the “adult Anne Frank” and a “singular hero” of the Nazi era—whose victim she became at age 29, Etty Hillesum has emerged through her writings as a profound spiritual teacher who amidst the war’s horrors could affirm the goodness and beauty of life and teach others to explore the landscape of the soul and the soul’s quest for truth and God. Her diaries, covering a two-year period (1941-42) and now available in more than a dozen languages, were first published in 1981 in Dutch and in 1983 in English. They chronicle her gradual transformation from being self-absorbed, troubled, and restless to experiencing inner peace and a contagious *joie de vivre*. Propelled by the heartfelt conviction that life was beautiful and God good, she then set out to help others find peace. By her own choice, she moved to the cramped transit camp of Westerbork to work there as a volunteer. Daily, frightened children and adults were awaiting transport by train to the concentration camp at Auschwitz. And daily Etty would be moving about among them and dispensing, like medicine, words of kindness and acts of mercy.



How did Etty find the strength and fortitude to show mercy and kindness toward those who were consumed by anger, resentment, and fear? How could she love the unlovable, even extend benevolent sentiments of forgiveness toward her people's tormentors? The secret to Etty's remarkable ability to be merciful and loving, even to the enemy, lies in her gradual discovery of her true self, an inner, stabilizing core at whose center lived God. She could be merciful toward others, show them compassion and understanding, because she had first learned to be merciful, forgiving, kind toward herself.

INNER LISTENING

An important tool in discovering her inner core or her soul's landscape is Etty's diary. It was probably at the recommendation of Julius Spier, her German therapist, mentor, and fellow Jew that Etty began writing a journal or "exercise book." A total of ten notebooks have survived, with the seventh missing and possibly the very first one also, along with the one she kept at Westerbork and which she took with

her on the train to Auschwitz. The extant diaries begin on March 8, 1941, one month after meeting Spier, and end on October 13, 1942, overlapping with her work at Westerbork that had begun on July 30, 1942.

Etty wanted to "work on" herself and become more peaceful and integrated. Recording her thoughts in diary format allowed Etty to monitor the dynamic landscape of her soul and to practice an inner listening or a "hineinhorchen" into the soul, an activity for which she could find no proper Dutch word. This close listening to the soul revealed her inner ambiguities and conflicting feelings, while permitting her to practice a blunt honesty with herself as well as a gentleness and concern for her soul's well-being. "Etty, my girl, I am not at all pleased with you," she would say chidingly. Then would follow a heart-to-heart talk with herself about why she was displeased, an analysis of her faulty thinking or her flights of fancy, and a lively and tenacious search for how best to clear up

things within--a search that would often result in her copying out longer passages from books on psychology, philosophy, and poetry, along with wisdom sayings and Scriptural quotations. Many of her diary entries close with a cheerful parting greeting, a "good night now!" as if to signal a tender patience with herself, a spirit willing to reconcile the conflicting factions within her, and the confidence that things would turn out right after all and become much clearer the next day.

The growing tenderness that Etty developed toward herself allowed for a blunt honesty. "Do you know that when it comes to 'being true to themselves,' most people are real amateurs?" she writes. "I, too. And if one lacks the courage to be oneself, then one also has no courage for others. One has no contact with one's fellow beings, feels lonely, and around that loneliness one spins all sorts of interesting theories, for instance the one about the "misunderstood soul," etc., but all that is nothing but false romanticism and a built-in escape" (40/41).

PRAYER AS A PATHWAY TO SELF-AWARENESS

Another "tool" Etty began to use in her exercise of self-awareness was prayer. Growing up in a family of assimilated Jews, she had little experience with how to pray. Watching her mentor Spier and reading the Psalms and other spiritual literature, a prayer practice evolved, along with the posture of kneeling on the coconut mat in her bathroom. At the outset, her prayer sprang from a desire to come to know her soul and to bring order to her interior chaos.

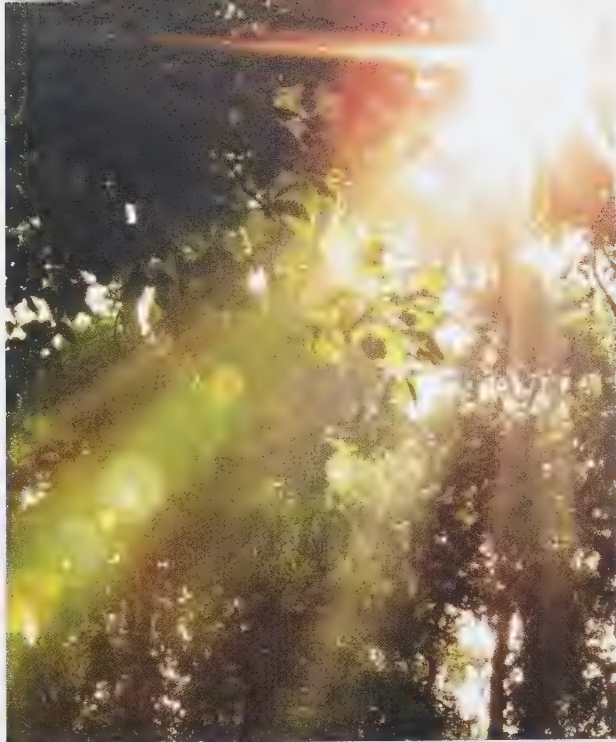
Spier modeled this pattern for her through his daily prayer. At first she mentioned God's name in mostly colloquial expressions, such as "God knows;" then the name was used as a personal appellation, alternating between "God" and "Lord."

The prayers in her diaries were initially brief, some consisting of only a sentence or two. They lengthened with Spier's death, her arrival at Westerbork, and upon the dissolution of the Jewish Council, when her own and her family's deportation became almost certain. The "girl who could not kneel" gradually became the one who could do so quite easily and, in time, could pray without ceasing at virtually any moment without the need for privacy or a certain posture.

"I kneel once more on the rough coconut matting," she writes, "my hands over my eyes and pray: 'Oh, Lord, let me feel at one with myself. Let me perform a thousand daily tasks with love, but let everyone spring from a greater central core of devotion and love.' Then it won't really matter what I do and where I am. But I still have a long way to go --" (50/51).

Initially drawn to the practice of daily prayer for its calming effects and the sense of serenity it produced, Etty later found herself engaged in an ongoing conversation and dialogue with God. This was especially true as the Nazi persecution of the Jews in the Netherlands and their execution in concentration camps became public. "Dear God, these are anxious times," Etty prays. "Tonight for the first time I lay in the dark with burning eyes as scene after scene of human suffering passed before me. I shall promise

"Many of her diary entries close with a cheerful parting greeting, a "good night now!" as if to signal a tender patience with herself, a spirit willing to reconcile the conflicting factions within her, and the confidence that things would turn out right after all and become much clearer the next day."



You one thing, God, just one very small thing...: I shall try to help You, God, to stop my strength ebbing away, though I cannot vouch for it in advance. But one thing is becoming increasingly clear to me: that You cannot help us, that we help You to help ourselves. And that is all we can manage these days and also all that really matters: that we safeguard that little of You, God, in ourselves. And perhaps in others as well" (59). Gradually, her attitude toward life and work were shaped by continuous prayer resulting in a sense of overflowing love toward God, self, and others.

MERCY TOWARD OTHERS

By prayerful listening to and conversing with God, Etty experienced love for people welling up in her so that she desired to be a healing balm for them, a calming and attentive presence. She is able to do so when serving as an assistant to Spier's therapeutic sessions. "Truly, my life is one long hearkening unto myself and unto others, unto God," she wrote. "And if I say that I hearken, it is really God who hearkens inside me. The most essential and the deepest in me hearkening unto the most essential and deepest in the other. God to God" (123). Commenting on the therapy sessions with Spier's patients, she

was grateful: "How great are the needs of Your creatures on this earth, oh God. I thank You for letting so many people come to me with their inner needs. They sit there, talking quietly and quite unsuspectingly, and suddenly their need erupts in all its nakedness. Then, there they are, bundles of human misery, desperate and unable to face life. . . . And that's when my task begins."

Etty compared her listening to others to a clearing of the pathway so that God might enter the other person's life. "It is not enough simply to proclaim You, God," she explained, or "to commend You to the hearts of others. One must also clear the path toward You in them, God, and to do that one has to be a keen judge of the human soul. A trained psychologist. Ties to father and mother, youthful memories, dreams, guilt feelings, inferiority complexes, and all the rest block the way. I embark on a slow voyage of exploration with everyone who comes to me. . . . Sometimes they seem to me like houses with open doors. I walk in and roam through passages and rooms, and every house is furnished a little differently, and yet they are all of them the same, and every one must be turned into a dwelling dedicated to You, oh God. And I promise You, yes, I promise that I shall try to find a dwelling and a refuge for You in as many houses as possible" (123/24).

This listening became an act of mercy. She allowed people to vent their anger, to voice their fears without contradicting or cutting them short. She administered the balm of compassion because she herself had learned to be compassionate and merciful toward her own shortcomings and mistakes.

MERCY: THE OVERFLOW OF LOVE EXPERIENCED

Her merciful demeanor was the overflow of love that she had experienced in conversation and prayer with God. Because she had become tender toward herself and that place within her where God was dwelling,



she was able to treat with tenderness those still unaware of their true self and God within.

Hate, Etty came to see, is the opposite of loving-kindness and compassion. She speculated on the aftermath of the war. “After this war, two torrents will be unleashed on the world: a torrent of loving-kindness and a torrent of hatred. And then I knew: I should take the field against hatred” (125). In a conversation with the writer Klaas Smelik, Etty is able to explain why: “we have so much work to do on ourselves that we shouldn’t even be thinking of hating our so-called enemies. We are hurtful enough to one another as it is. And I don’t really know what

I mean when I say that there are bullies and bad characters among our own people, for no one is really “bad” deep down” (125/26).

Being merciful toward others requires constant attentiveness to one’s own motives. In a conversation with their German cook Käthe, who was defending her country, Etty grew annoyed, aggressive, and irritated. Then she realizes that the Germans “are people like ourselves. . . . [and] that is something we must cling to through thick and thin, and shout in the face of all that hatred” (149).

At Westerbork, she stayed in a room of women and girls whose anguish and terror was palpable. They

toss, turn, sob, and try to subdue any emotion and thought. "I was sometimes filled with an infinite tenderness." She found herself praying to become "the thinking heart of the barracks." In fact, she wanted to be in the presence of people experiencing anguish in order to give them relief through a word of comfort, a smile, a warm gesture. "Sometimes I might sit down beside someone, put an arm round a shoulder, say very little and just look into their eyes." Other times, she would go over to them and stand with arms folded across her chest and force a smile for those "huddled, shattered scraps of humanity" (156). At the end of the day, there was always the same feeling: "I love people so much. Never any bitterness about what was done to them, but always love for those who knew how to bear so much. . . ." (156).

Etty's last communication comes from a postcard thrown from a freight train on which she, her parents, and her brother were being transported to Auschwitz. Some of the lines read: "The Lord is my tower. . . . We left the camp singing."

SHOW MERCY, GAIN PEACE

In conclusion, Etty teaches us that outer mercy and inner peace are intertwined. Be first merciful and patient with yourself by paying attention to your motives and seeking to remedy flaws in character; thereby, one will unearth one's inner core, the true self, or the repository where God dwells, and one will experience a sense of peace. Invariably, mercy and compassion toward others will well up because one no longer sees oneself as separate but can identify with others while being able to offer them one's centered healing and calming presence.

Notes: All page notes are from Etty Hillesum: Essential Writings. Edited by Annemarie S. Kidder. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2009.

YOUR LEGACY LIVES ON...



Estate Gifts notably impact the ministry of Guest House. Creating a gift through your will or trust is a meaningful way to leave a legacy that will make a difference for the greater good of the Catholic Church.

Your estate gift can support a specific area or program, such as education or scholarships.

Guest House offers treatment to all Catholic clergy and religious regardless of their ability to afford care.

We provide nearly \$1 million annually in uncompensated care to those in need.

PLEASE CONTACT

Erika Walker, Guest House Development,
for more information about creating a legacy
gift that reflects your wishes:

248-393-8933 or ewalker@guesthouse.org

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. As a model of mercy, Reverend Kidder uses Etty Hillesum who died in a Nazi concentration camp. Etty's journals chronicle her transformation from being self-absorbed and troubled to loving her tormentors. At the heart of that transformation was her own process of becoming merciful toward herself. Do I believe I have been forgiven; can I accept the mercy directed my way?
2. An essential aspect of Etty's growth in becoming merciful was her commitment to attentive listening; she allowed people to vent their anger. Am I a good listener – to the voice of God in my heart? Am I patiently attentive to others as they share their struggles? Do I ever think of God as the "supreme listener" who gently absorbs (and thus transforms) my anger?
3. How could our parish/community celebrate the steps of becoming merciful?



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The Rev. Annemarie S. Kidder serves as pastor/head of staff of the First Presbyterian Church of Monroe, Michigan. She is the author, editor, and translator of thirteen books, including collections of the religious poetry and essays of Rainer Maria Rilke, sermons of Karl Rahner, S.J., and Etty Hillesum: Essential Writings in the Modern Spiritual Masters Series. Annemarie is an IHM associate and was introduced to Etty by the late Margaret Brennan, IHM.



BLESSED ARE THE PURE OF HEART

Dr. Cooney Hathaway



INTRODUCTION:

When I think about the sixth beatitude of Matthew's gospel, "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God," I am reminded of the words of Soren Kierkegaard, "Purity of Heart is to will one thing." In considering all the great friends of God whom I could choose to illustrate this beatitude, the saint who comes to mind is Therese of Lisieux. It took me a long time to appreciate Therese. She has often been overly sentimentalized, "sugarized," sweet, childlike, obedient, passive, a victim.

But that is not the real Therese. Her single-minded pursuit of God through the peaks and valleys of her short life, has resonated with countless believers because it is honest and accessible. In his book, *Blessed Among All Women*, Robert Ellsberg states that perfect people - if any exist - have little to teach us. But from the real saints we have much to learn. Therese is one of those real saints. Through her openness to God and generosity of spirit, she allowed God to lead her from a self-centered love, to a self-giving love of God and others.

ST. BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX

To appreciate Therese's gradual maturing in her passionate love for God, I have chosen the interpretative lens of the classic, "On Loving God," by St. Bernard of Clairvaux. This 12th century monk lived during the age of Chivalry when troubadours roamed the countryside singing about romantic love and the beauty of friendship.

A shrewd evangelizer, Bernard used this discovery of love and friendship on a human level, to teach and preach about what it meant to fall in love with God on a spiritual level. Bernard wrote this short but insightful treatise in response to a question from a fellow monk: How should God be loved?" In this work, Bernard describes four stages of growth in our love for God - a movement from fearful distance to loving intimacy. He describes the stages of our growth in the love of God as follows:

- Love of self for self's sake
- Love of God for self's sake
- Love of God for God's Sake
- Love of Self for God's Sake.

Bernard often stated that God is nothing but a realist; that is, God manifests his goodness by meeting us where we are. To see how God revealed himself to Therese, we must begin with the Martin family. Therese's father - Louis Martin - was the child of an army captain. At 20 Louis tried to enter the monks of St. Bernard. He was turned down due to his lack of education. He then decided to learn how to be a clock maker. Therese's mother, Zelig Guerin was the daughter of a Calvary soldier. At age 19 she tried to

enter the convent of the sisters of St. Vincent, but was refused. Consequently, she decided to learn lace-making and hopefully marry and have a large family. Louis and Zelig met and married in 1858. Zelig's wish was fulfilled as she gave birth to nine children - Marie, Pauline, Leonie, Helene, two boys, Celine and in 1873, Therese. Helene and the two boys died at birth. As we shall see, Therese's family had a lasting influence on her life.

LOVE OF SELF FOR SELF'S SAKE

Bernard of Clairvaux realistically describes this first stage of love: "Because our nature is rather frail and weak, we are driven by necessity to serve nature first. This results in bodily love, by which we love ourselves for our own sake."

Therese's early years were difficult. She suffered a gastric illness at eight weeks of age.

"The little one is suffering horribly," her mother stated. Recently diagnosed with cancer, Zelig's doctor was concerned that her milk was poisoning the baby. Thus, Therese was sent to live with a wet-nurse, Rose Taille and her family in a nearby village. Visited by her family every Thursday, Therese did not have the bonding experience with her mother that normally takes place in the first year of life. Fear of abandonment would be a reoccurring issue for Therese. When she returns at 15 months old, Therese clings to Zelig, never wanting her out of her sight.

As all young children, Therese was full of herself. Letters from Zelig to the girls at school describe Therese as "clever and original; good and sweet as an angel. She has a blond head and a golden heart and is very tender and candid." Yet, Zelig also describes

"How should God be loved?... St. Bernard describes four stages of growth in our love for God - a movement from fearful distance to loving intimacy."

Therese as an imp and an urchin! "When she says 'no', Zélie observes, "nothing can make her change her mind and she can be terribly obstinate." (All quotations are taken from Therese's autobiography, *The Story of a Soul*) Therese was given to tantrums and tears of rage when she did not get her way.

Therese, however, did not stay long in this first stage. The priority of loving God in the Martin family would move her quickly to Bernard's second stage of loving God for self's sake.

LOVE OF GOD FOR SELF'S SAKE

This second stage describes a love of God for what God does for the self. To gain insight into Therese's lived experience of this stage, we need to understand the role of religion in the Martin household. Life centered around the Church with limited interest in matters outside religion. Therese received two images of God from her family. From her father, she experienced God as a loving father. From her mother she met a God of rigorous, recriminative justice - a God obsessed with one's sinfulness. Consequently, the education of the Martin girls - though loving and tender with many hugs and kisses - was concentrated on making them good. Good children went to heaven which was a much better place than on Earth. Bad children went to hell.

God became a source of discipline. When she was still very small, Marie recalls, "It was necessary only to say to her, 'that offends God' to move her to do the right thing." When Therese was four years old, she and Celine put together a rule of life, a plan of prayer, picking up the habit of the Martin household of continually talking about God. Thus, Therese learned early on to love God for her own sake; that is, in order to win the love and the approval of her mother, father and sisters.

A series of losses, beginning with the death of her mother at age four, changed Therese. The loss of her mother was permanent and future perceived abandonments would take their toll on Therese. She writes, "I who had been so lively, so communicative,



was now a shy and quiet little girl and over-sensitive. Merely to be looked at made me burst into tears."

Therese turned to Pauline as her new mother. She used to show Therese pious pictures, one significantly called, "A little flower at the door of the Tabernacle." Therese identified with this flower, so patiently offering itself to Jesus. Pauline decided to enter Carmel when Therese was nine, leaving her doubly orphaned. Now Therese, always prone to crying, wept uncontrollably "I can't tell you what misery I went through at that moment; this was life....when you saw it as it really was - it just meant continued suffering." The family tried to compensate. They lavished affection on her, granting her every wish, but Therese was not at peace. She was high-strung, supersensitive, breaking into tears at the least provocation.

Therese admits she was caught in a vicious circle without knowing how to come out of it. In retrospect she writes, "God would have to work a little miracle to make me grow up in an instant." That miracle happened early Christmas morning, 1886. As their custom, Therese had placed her shoes at the chimney for Santa Claus to fill them with goodies. When the family returned home from midnight mass,

Therese and Celine were putting their hats away upstairs when they overheard their father complain a bit testily that Therese was getting too old for the childish foolishness of the shoes. Therese was devastated, tears flowing down her cheeks. Celine begged her not to go downstairs in this condition. "You will ruin Christmas for everyone." Therese drew herself up, wiped away the tears and proceeded downstairs, enthused with the gifts as if she had heard nothing.

Regarding this experience, Therese wrote in her autobiography, "I was no longer the same. Jesus had changed my heart." A great healing had taken place. This experience was her first real decentering, the beginning of every true conversion. Later Therese summed up her conversion experience in these lucid words: "I felt charity enter into my soul, and the need to forget myself and to please others; since then I have been happy."

Therese's conversion initiated a honeymoon adventure with God. Therese and Celine embarked on a faith walk together. Their days were filled with prayer and pious conversations, with consolation and fervor, with a sense of God's presence. This period lasted over the next year and a half. Reflecting on this period of her life, Therese wrote, "Doubt was impossible. Faith and hope unnecessary. And love made us find on earth the One we were seeking."

Marie's decision to enter Carmel was the catalyst for Therese to consider her own vocation. "I came to the conclusion," she wrote, "that this must be the desert in which God meant me, too, to take refuge. So strong was my feeling about this that it left no shadow of doubt in my mind. It wasn't just a dream of an impressible child; it was certain with all the certainty of a divine vocation."

LOVE OF GOD FOR GOD'S SAKE

Therese's honeymoon with God ended when she entered Carmel in April, 1888. She was fifteen years old. Bernard of Clairvaux describes this third stage as loving God for God's sake; not for the consolation

one receives from God, but for God, pure and simple. Therese states that even after all her dreaming about Carmel, she entered with no illusions about the life - that it was exactly what she expected. Yet, almost in the next breath, she speaks of the suffering she met - "those first footsteps of mine brought me up against more thorns than roses."

WHAT WERE THE THORNS OF WHICH SHE SPEAKS SO POIGNANTLY?

One was the lack of variety in her life. Once the exciting newness of life in Carmel had worn off, she complained of *acedia* - a lack of variety in life, a sameness, a lack of anything to which she could look forward. A second concern was her lack of skill at manual labor - washing clothes, setting a table, sewing clothes. Her sisters had doted on Therese, leaving her ill-prepared to deal with practical chores of life. She suffered from her own incompetence at such tasks and the impatient and cutting remarks made by others about her awkwardness.

A third trial was being misunderstood by many of the sisters who perceived her as a goody-goody, a religious know-it-all. Yet they also sensed that her commitment was greater than theirs. As a result, Therese was often lonely. The worst suffering came from the hands of the Prioress, Mother Marie de Gonzague. She was a strong and autocratic personality who made it very clear to Therese that she would not treat her as a child as her sisters did. She was harsh with her, rebuking her frequently in public. Therese suffered acutely at her hands. (See Monica Furlong, *Therese of Lisieux*)

From a spiritual point of view, what was happening here? John of the Cross describes such trials as the Dark Night of the Senses. God was pruning and purifying Therese of any inordinate desires or attachments that would block her total openness to Him. In hindsight Therese would look back at these trials and state that because of them she matured spiritually and learned to love - without praise, encouragement, or sympathy. She began to practice a purity of heart to will one thing - God alone.



ALONG WITH THE THORNS, WHAT WERE SOME OF THE ROSES?

Over time, God weaned Therese from reciting fixed prayers to a more personal relationship with Jesus through meditation and finally, the simple being in love of contemplation. “For me,” Therese states, “prayer is a surge of the heart; It is a simple look toward heaven; It is a cry of recognition and of love, embracing both trial and joy.”

A second grace was the change in Therese’s image of God, from a God of recriminative justice to the God revealed by Jesus - a God of love, mercy and compassion. Third, Therese discovered her “Little Way.” She realized that she was not called to an ascetical ascent up the mountain of perfection, but rather to the daily choice of self-sacrificing love - “To get on with life as it actually is. Living it with kindness, unselfishness and care. Always doing the tiniest thing right and doing it with love.”

When Therese was appointed assistant novice mistress, her care for the sisters brought a life-changing realization. Therese had dreamt of a dramatic vocation; of making great sacrifices for God. She wrote: ‘I feel within me other vocations. I feel the vocation of the warrior, the priest, the apostle, the doctor, the martyr....yet, I am called to “be” love right where I am - here at Carmel among the hurt and rigid people so much in need of the core of Jesus’ message. Ah Lord, I know you don’t command the impossible. You know very well that never would I be able to love my sisters as You love them, unless You, O my Jesus, loved them in me.” At last Therese knew the meaning of her vocation. She realized her call was to feed the hungry and heal the sick where she found them in Carmel. She states, “We can only love as Jesus loved if we love with his love. We need to let Jesus love others in us, love passing through us as through a conduit.”

THE DARK NIGHT OF FAITH

Therese's dark night of faith began the winter of 1896 when she woke up one morning to find her handkerchief covered with blood. When she informed Mother Marie de Gonzague of her illness, she asked for no special treatment and she received none. In her biography of Therese, Monica Furlong describes Therese's acute suffering in body and spirit as she battled with tuberculosis. "The physical exhaustion that accompanies bleeding, the loneliness of facing death without the loving sympathy of others, the hurt of Mother's cruelty, all filled her with despair." Therese states, "One would have to travel through this dark tunnel to understand its darkness." Yet, she clung to her conviction that God was, and would be present in her suffering. She states, "Ah! may Jesus pardon me if I have caused Him any pain, but He knows very well that while I do not have the joy of faith, I am trying to carry out its works at least. I believe I have made more acts of faith in this past year than all through my whole life." Here Therese is courageously living Bernard of Clairvaux's third stage of loving God: A love of God *for God's sake*.

Therese's constant companions at this time of her life were the Scriptures and the works of John of the Cross. She was familiar with his teaching on the dark night of the spirit's purgation of intellect, memory and will so as to enlarge her capacity to receive the inflow of God into the depths of her being. Therese struggled with temptations against belief in God and the reality of heaven. She found that she could not connect life's memories to produce meaning and hope. And, as is true of anyone suffering tremendous pain, she felt alone. Yet, through it all, Therese chose to believe in God for God, hope in God for God, love God for God. When asked by one of the sisters, "What are you doing?" Therese responded, "I am praying." "And what are you saying?" the sister asked. "I am saying nothing. I am loving Him." Purity of Heart is to will one thing. For Therese that

meant loving God alone. She died of tuberculosis September 30, 1897, age 24. Her last words were "Oh, I love Him....My God...I love You."

LOVE OF SELF FOR GOD'S SAKE

In this final stage of loving God, Bernard of Clairvaux tells us that we learn to accept ourselves and love ourselves for God's Sake; that is, to love the self God loves and desires us to become. Gradually Therese came to know and accept herself as God's "Little flower."

"I understood that if all flowers wanted to be roses, nature would lose her springtime beauty, and the fields would no longer be decked out with little flowers. And so it is in the world of Souls, Jesus' garden. He willed to create great Souls comparable to lilies and roses, but he has created smaller ones and these must be content to be daisies or violets destined to give joy to God's glances when He looks down at His feet. Perfection consists in doing His will, in being what He wills us to be."

Through this all-too-brief article, we have accompanied Therese as she grew from a spoiled, pampered child into a young woman whose ardent love of God and insights into the spiritual life earned her the title, Doctor of the Church. Through her struggles, setbacks and victories she remained steadfast in her relentless, single-minded pursuit of God as the one thing necessary. For this reason she embodies for me, and countless others, what Jesus must have expected in a disciple who lived this sixth Beatitude, "Blessed are the pure of Heart, for they shall see God."

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. In one of the earlier translations of the sixth Beatitude, instead of “pure of heart,” the beatitude proclaimed “Blessed are the single-hearted...” Such a translation certainly resonates with Dr. Cooney-Hathaway’s essay and the initial observation of Soren Kierkegaard, “Purity of heart is to will one thing.” Am I single-hearted or am I pulled in many divergent directions? How might I become more “pure” in my motivation and desires?
2. As St. Therese struggled through the stages of love to reach “loving herself for God’s sake,” she suffered much loneliness, desolation and darkness. Purity or single-hearted love meant “loving the self God loves and desires us to become.” Do I believe I am deeply loved by God as I am? Am I at peace with my particular life circumstances?
3. One of the ironies of St. Therese is that she herself struggled to “see” God but lived with much darkness. Yet, for that very reason, because of her transparent struggle, she helps many of us “see” God. Do I believe that I can be for others a vision of God’s presence – even though I may myself feel totally inadequate?
4. Purity of heart is often understood as having no agenda, being radically open to the Lord and available for others, being without guile, seeing only the best in one’s self or all others. How could our parish embody such a “viewpoint” that looks for God alone?



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Patricia Cooney Hathaway, Ph.D., is Professor of Spiritual and Systematic Theology at Sacred Heart Major Seminary. Dr. Cooney Hathaway has been involved in the ministry of spiritual direction for over twenty years. She has done extensive lecturing nation-wide in the areas of theology, spirituality and the relationship between human and spiritual development. Dr. Cooney Hathaway authored the book, *Weaving Faith and Experience: A Woman's Perspective as part of a Call to Holiness Series on Catholic Women's Spirituality*, published by St. Anthony Messenger Press. In addition, she co-authored a successful Lilly Foundation grant of \$1.5 million for the education and formation of ecclesial lay ministers. She has been the Project Director for the implementation of this grant. She has also received the Pope John Paul II Memorial, The Splendor of Truth Award, by the Catholic Lawyers Guild, Diocese of Lansing, Michigan.



BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS

Jim Forest



RESTORING THE BIBLICAL SENSE OF "PEACE"

While in Moscow a few years ago, I had the opportunity to watch two restorers cleaning a large icon of Saint Nicholas that was laid out on a table just outside the pastor's office. They estimated the dark panel was 300 years old. As decades passed and thousands of candles burned before it, the image had become increasingly hidden under smoke-absorbing varnish until it was almost black. Using alcohol and balls of cotton, their gentle, painstaking efforts gradually revealed sharp lines and bright colors that brought the icon back to life. I felt I was witnessing a small resurrection.

Words, like icons, can reach a point where restoration is needed. The word "peace" has been on the receiving end of a great deal of political smoke. In America the Strategic Air Command, one of the world's principal instruments for waging nuclear war, has as its motto, "Peace is our profession." In the former Soviet Union, the Russian word for peace — "MIP" (pronounced mir) — served as a one-syllable summary of all the policies and programs of the Kremlin, from the harassment and imprisonment of dissenters to whatever wars the leaders had decided served their interests. To this day, years after the collapse of the USSR, the word "peace" is hard to use in Russia. "It still has a Soviet smell to it," a friend in Moscow, Karina Cherniak, explained to me. "It is a word that reminds us of lies, fear, propaganda and military parades — things that are the opposite of peace."

One way to restore the word is to see how peace is used in the Bible. In Hebrew, it is *shalom*, meaning a condition of perfect welfare, serenity, prosperity, happiness and peaceful relations between people. *Eirene*, the word used in the Greek New Testament, describes peace as God's ultimate blessing. Among the things that Christ did not say in the Sermon on the Mount is, "Blessed are those who prefer peace, wish for peace, await peace, love peace, or praise peace." His blessing is on the makers of peace. He requires an active rather than a passive role. In fact peace itself is a dynamic state which can be anything but peaceful from the point of view of those who wish everyone would simply be quiet and do what is expected of them by whoever happens to be in charge.

CHRIST'S PEACE DISTURBS

Christ's peace is not placid. He is at his most paradoxical when he says, "Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword" (Mt 10:34). We see how those who try to live Christ's peace may find themselves in trouble, as all those who have died a martyr's death bear witness.

Unfortunately, for most of us peace is not the Kingdom of God but a slightly improved version of the world we already have. We would like to get rid of conflict without eliminating the factors, spiritual and material, that draw us into conflict. Many have regarded the Prince of Peace as a disturber of the peace. We see how unsettling Christ's peace is when we notice how much turmoil surrounds the events related in the Gospel. Freeing an afflicted man from a demon, he sends the evil spirit into a herd of pigs, who in turn race into the lake and drown themselves; the local people, owners of the pigs, appeal to Christ to leave them alone. Among pious Jews, many are offended because he heals people on the Sabbath — could he not do these things any other day of the week? In healing the blind and paralyzed, he was stripping them of their livelihood

as beggars; their daily bread would never again come so easily. Christ's cleansing of the Temple in Jerusalem involves overturning tables and expelling the money changers. Even the raising of Lazarus is resisted by Mary and Martha and friends mourning with them — "Don't open the tomb! By now his body is stinking."

FRANCIS OF ASSISI: MAN OF PEACE

No saint has been more identified with the beatitude of peacemaking than Saint Francis of Assisi. The most famous prayer for peace, echoing the seventh beatitude, is attributed to him: "Lord, make me an instrument of your peace." Whether or not these exact words were said by Francis, the prayer sums up his life and at the same time illustrates how disturbing Christ's peace can be to those who are basically pleased with the way things are.

As a young man Francis seemed well on his way to realizing all his father Pietro di Bernardone's expectations: he was attractive, ambitious, popular among his peers, useful in his father's cloth shop on Assisi's main square, so well dressed that he was a walking advertisement for his father's wares. However his life began to change course after a year-long imprisonment following a battle with the neighboring town of Perugia in the year 1202. Francis, then 20 years old, was lucky not to have been among the many maimed or killed in the fighting. He had imagined the glory of battle and being a man-of-arms for years, but now he had seen the reality of war: hatred turning beautiful faces into hideous masks, twisting sane minds to madness. Freed at last by payment of a ransom, he returned home disillusioned and gravely ill. He spent months recovering.

The first glimpse we have of the transformation taking place in Francis's soul happened when he was riding outside the town and came upon a young man whose family had lost their property and fortune because of the war. All that was left to them was a

ruined tower. The youth wore rags. Francis got off his horse and gave away his own splendid clothing. Then there was the day when he stopped to pray in the chapel of San Damiano, a building in the final stages of decay but still possessing a large cross-shaped image of the Crucifixion painted in the ancient iconographic tradition, thus an image stressing less the suffering of Christ than his free gift of himself. Having given up dreams of glory in war, and finding moneymaking and spending a circular path going nowhere, he was desperate to have some sign of what God wanted him to do. Then in the darkness he heard Christ whisper to him, as if the icon itself were speaking: "Francis, go and repair my house, which, as you see, is falling into ruin."lxiv Taking the words literally, Francis set about the hard labor of rebuilding a chapel that no one else regarded as needed, financing the project by selling off some valuable items from his father's warehouse. This unauthorized action caused an explosion of paternal wrath that culminated in a trial before the bishop in Assisi's marketplace. Francis not only admitted his fault and restored his father's money but removed all his garments, presenting them to his father with the words, "Hitherto I have called you father on earth; but now I say, 'Our Father, who art in Heaven.'" The astonished bishop hastily covered Francis with his own mantel. Thus Francis cut the last threads binding him to the ambitions that had dominated his earlier life.

By now Francis had only one ambition: to live according to the Gospel. He understood this to mean a life without money, wearing the same rags beggars wore, and owning nothing that might stir up the envy of others and thus give rise to violence. He wanted to be one of the least, a little brother living in poverty, rather than a great man.

What was most surprising was the spirit of joy that surrounded Francis. His customary greeting to those he met was "pace e bene" — "peace and goodness." Before long a dozen friends joined him, forming the nucleus of a new order, the Minors (the Lesser

Brothers, rather than the Majores, the great ones who ruled the cities and organized wars). They were not simply poor but had, he explained, married the most beautiful bride, Lady Poverty. Assisi's bishop didn't approve. "You and your brothers are a disgrace," he told Francis. "At least you can provide what will make you a bit more respectable." "O Domini mi," replied Francis, "if we had possessions we should need weapons to protect them."

In 1210 the brothers walked to Rome and won approval for their simple rule of life from Pope Innocent III — this despite advice the pope had received that such absolute poverty was impractical. Legend explains that Pope Innocent had a dream of Francis in his rags preventing Rome's principal church from collapsing.

FRANCIS AND THE SULTAN

Among the most well-attested stories in Francis's life is his meeting in 1219 with one of Christianity's chief opponents, Sultan Malik-al-Kamil. It was the time of the Fifth Crusade, shortly after a Crusader victory at the port city of Damietta (modern Dumyat) on the Nile Delta. Francis, who opposed all killing no matter what the cause, sought the blessing of the Cardinal who was chaplain to the Crusader forces to go and preach the Gospel to the sultan. The cardinal told him that the Moslems understood only weapons and that the one useful thing a Christian could do was to kill them. At last the cardinal stood aside, certain that Francis and Illuminato, the brother traveling with him, were being led to die as martyrs. The two left the Crusader encampment singing the psalm, "The Lord is my shepherd . . ."

Soldiers of the sultan's army captured the pair, beat them, and then brought them before Malik-al-Kamil, who asked if they wished to become Moslems. Saying yes would save their lives. Francis replied that they came to seek his conversion; if they failed in their effort, then let them be beheaded. According to legend, Francis offered to enter a furnace to

demonstrate the truth of Christ's Gospel; whether or not he made such a proposal, going unarmed into the enemy's stronghold was analogous to leaping into a fire.

For a month Francis and the sultan met daily. Though neither converted the other, the sultan had such warmth for his guests that not only did he spare their lives but gave them a passport allowing them to visit Christian holy places under Muslim control and presented Francis with a beautifully carved ivory horn which is now among the relics of the saint kept in the Basilica of Assisi. It is recorded that "the two [Francis and Malik-al-Kamil] parted as brothers."lxv

What a different history we would look back upon if Moslems had encountered Christians who did not slaughter their enemies. When the Crusaders took Jerusalem in 1099 during the First Crusade, no inhabitant of the city was spared — men, women and children were hacked to pieces until, the chronicle says, the Crusaders' horses waded in blood. While Christians in the first three centuries would have taken a nonviolent example for granted, by the thirteenth century Francis was a voice crying in the wilderness: Christianity in the west was preaching the holiness of war.

Francis became, in a sense, the soldier he had dreamed of becoming as a boy; he was just as willing as the bravest soldier to lay down his life in defense of others. There was only this crucial difference. His purpose was not the conquest but the conversion of his adversary; this required refusing the use of weapons of war because no one has ever been converted by violence. He always regarded conversion as a realistic goal. After all, if God could convert Francis, anyone might be converted.

But such actions — equivalent to leaping into a furnace — are only possible when nothing in life is more important than Christ and his kingdom, a discipleship that begins with poverty of spirit and ascends to being an ambassador of Christ's peace. "They are truly peacemakers," Saint Francis wrote in his Admonitions, "who are able to preserve their peace of mind and heart for love of our Lord Jesus Christ, despite all that they suffer in this world."

PEACE-MAKING TODAY

None of us is Francis of Assisi. Who is the peacemaker who is needed in our world today? It is each of us. The beatitude of peacemaking is part of ordinary Christian life. Serving peace is not easy. Often it is harder to seek dialogue with someone close at hand — a spouse, relative, co-worker, employer or neighbor — than with a distant enemy seen only on television screens. In our home, scene of many battles on such monumental issues as television, table manners, dishwashing, length of showers and cleaning of rooms, it is my wife who deserves a Nobel Prize for peacemaking. She more than anyone has helped us talk and listen our way through many squabbles, disagreements and misunderstandings. Her successes have value not just within our family but dramatically affect what sort of people we are outside the home. A recent letter from a friend in Canada included this observation: "To be a peacemaker, however tiny or great the issue and the stakes — I have in mind one of my sons being willing to let the other pour his orange juice first rather than fight over it — is always heroic, is always reminiscent of the Cross and the sacrifice of Christ and his courage to appear weak. He could have called legions of angels to rescue him and fight at the moment but instead he chose to ask the Father's forgiveness for his

"None of us is Francis of Assisi. Who is the peacemaker who is needed in our world today? It is each of us. The beatitude of peacemaking is part of ordinary Christian life."

enemies. Being a peacemaker is hardly ever popular with people who are sparring to win, it really takes all the ‘fun’ out of it and can be denigrated as ‘wimpy’ or foolish. Also, being a peacemaker is different than being an ‘appeaser,’ not making waves, not standing up for truth. Just as the idea of ‘humility’ can often be misunderstood as a passive act, so can ‘keeping the peace’ in a dysfunctional way be confused with being a peacemaker. On the other hand, choosing to deny oneself and avoid a conflict originating in willfulness and selfishness, is also peacemaking, or rather ‘war prevention.’”

Sometimes Christ’s peace seems especially absent between his followers. Among Christians, we don’t simply disagree with each other on many topics, but often despise those who hold what we regard as false or heretical views. Disagreement may be necessary — the defense of truth is a virtue — but hatred is a grave sin. Most often it isn’t truth about which we battle but opinion, vindication of our irritation with someone else, or just the desire to have things our own way. I have seen parishes destroyed over issues that participants five years later were embarrassed to think ever mattered to them, but at the time there was enough anger to spark a war. That our own parish has held together despite interpersonal frictions and a wide range of opinions on potentially divisive issues owes much to quiet efforts made by various individuals, lay and clergy, during periods of tension.

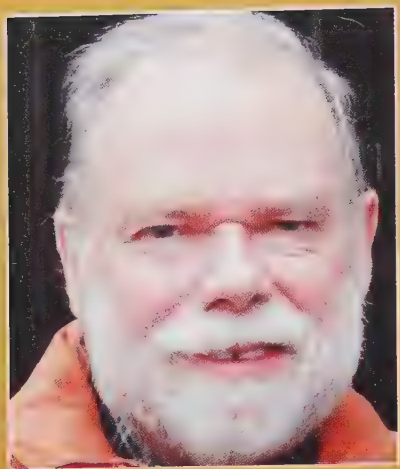
THE EYES AND EARS OF PEACE

The ear and eye have much to do with peacemaking; the less carefully we listen, the less attentively we see each other, the more likely we are to become embroiled in irresolvable conflict. The phrase active listening has taken root in recent years as a way of describing quiet, patient attention to what others say so that the listener can repeat what he or she has heard with such understanding and attention to detail that opponents are certain they have been heard. Such listening can dramatically change the

climate so that real dialogue happens. Without conscientious listening and attention to the face and physical attitude of the other person, dialogue is impossible. What is needed is hospitality of the face and ear.

A still more important dimension of peacemaking is prayer — prayer for enemies, adversaries, opponents or whomever we fear, find difficult, or wish would vanish from our lives. “The two main activities in peace work are prayer and listening,” Sister Rosemary Lynch reminds people. “Christ says we must love our enemies and pray for them. The two go together. You will never love anyone you don’t pray for. Prayer opens a channel inside us to participate in God’s love for the other person.” Far from loving our opponent, as Christ commands us to do, it often happens that we don’t even respect him or try to understand him or consider that it may not be him who is wrong but me. Even if they happen to be dead wrong, there may be ways in which my attitude or response keeps them from changing their mind or way of life.

Our own failure to love is a major part of the problem. As Thomas Merton said in a letter to Dorothy Day: “Persons are not known by intellect alone, not by principles alone, but only by love. It is when we love the other, the enemy, that we obtain from God the key to an understanding of who he is, and who we are. It is only this realization that can open to us the real nature of our duty, and of right action. To shut out the person and to refuse to consider him as a person, as an other self, we resort to the ‘impersonal law’ and to abstract ‘nature.’ That is to say we block off the reality of the other, we cut the intercommunication of our nature and his nature, and we consider only our own nature with its rights, its claims, its demands. And we justify the evil we do to our brother because he is no longer a brother, he is merely an adversary, an accused. To restore communication, to see our oneness of nature with him, and to respect his personal rights and his integrity, his worthiness of love, we have to



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jim Forest is the author of biographies of Dorothy Day (*All Is Grace*) and Thomas Merton (*Living With Wisdom*). His most recent book is *The Road of War is Far: Thomas Merton's Advice to Peacemakers*. This essay draws on Forest's book, *Ladder of the Beatitudes*.

see ourselves as similarly accused along with him . . . and needing, with him, the ineffable gift of grace and mercy to be saved. Then, instead of pushing him down, trying to climb out by using his head as a stepping-stone for ourselves, we help ourselves to rise by helping him to rise. For when we extend our hand to the enemy who is sinking in the abyss, God reaches out to both of us, for it is he first of all who extends our hand to the enemy. It is he who 'saves himself' in the enemy, who makes use of us to recover the lost groat which is his image in our enemy." lxviii

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Jim Forest makes the point that the 7th Beatitude refers to "peace-makers" – that is, peace is not just a pious wish but something that requires our active commitment and involvement. Yet, as he also explains, peace in the Biblical sense is a gift of God. How do we balance our responsibility to take concrete action with the fact that peace is not a human construction? Where does prayer fit in?
2. Jim also notes that "keeping the peace" and appeasing others should not be confused with genuine "peace-making." He suggests simple steps on an immediate level or what he calls "hospitality of the face and ear..." How might that play out in our parish, community or family?
3. Thomas Merton's message about peace to Dorothy Day is very eloquent: "When we extend our hand to the enemy who is sinking in the abyss, God reaches out to both of us..." By allowing God's love to take hold in us, other divisions and judgments pass away and we see our ultimate "oneness." Look back over your life: can you recall a time when an enemy became a friend? How did it happen?



Serving the Catholic Church for more than sixty years by bringing healing to clergy and men and women religious through our residential addiction treatment programs – offering the best opportunity for quality recovery and overall health and wellness

**Information regarding interventions, referrals
and specific program services
available 24 hours a day at 800-626-6910 or
GuestHouse.org**



Joe Shoots, MA, LLP, CAADC
Executive Director
Men's Treatment Program
jshoots@guesthouse.org



Mary Ellen Merrick, IHM, D.Min., MAC
Executive Director
Women's Treatment Program
memerrick@guesthouse.org

Guest House, Inc., included in the Official Catholic Directory, is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, licensed and CARF accredited health care provider and specializes in addiction treatment for Catholic clergy and religious. We rely on philanthropy from individuals, organizations, corporations and foundations to carry out our ministry.

Strengthening Catholic Communities since 1956
1601 Joslyn Road, Lake Orion, Michigan 48360



BLESSED ARE THOSE PERSECUTED FOR JUSTICE'S SAKE

Damian Zynda, Th.D.





WHAT DO WE MEAN BY JUSTICE?

This eighth Beatitude refers to "justice/righteousness;" the Greek word used (*dikaiosune*) can refer to righteousness in the sense of fulfilling the requirements of the Law of Moses or it can also mean being fair and honest in using the resources of which we are a steward. The two meanings actually converge nicely and complement each other, thus enhancing the full meaning and potential of this beatitude.

Justice as conformity to principle and right action was the norm in Jesus' day. Being a devout Jew was predicated upon uncompromising conformity to the Law as delineated in the Ten Commandments and Leviticus. Jesus vigorously challenged a narrow interpretation and insisted that conformity to the Law was empty apart from a relationship with God and service to the common good. When right action is not paired with a radical change of heart it can easily become narcissistic or self-righteous. Thomas a'Becket, in *A Man for All Seasons*, captures it best: "this above all else is the greatest of treasons, to do the right thing for the wrong reason."

Justice is the marriage of fulfilment of the Law and right action. For Christians, the Law is Love. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind and all your strength, and love your neighbor as yourself. The relationship between the concepts of love and justice is one thing; how they become integrated in a Christian life is another. This integration is the work of grace: experiencing and responding to God's love grounds and transforms a person firmly in the Divine identity. This Divine relationship then commissions the Christian to labor for the Kingdom of God by right action. Accepting intimacy with God is risky. It stretches a person beyond the frontiers of perceived possibilities because it is generative by nature. What is born is a keen awareness of God's true nature and a deeper understanding of the complexities of human potentials and the wounds that obstruct human progress and the Kingdom of God. When accepted, love radically changes us. It heals and restores a dignity lost to sin. It frees us from perceived and real constraints. It leads to heroic choices with far reaching consequences.

THE EXAMPLE OF ROMERO

Choices reveal the truth of who we are, with whom we stand, and what we value. Jesus chose God His father again and again. Archbishop Oscar Romero did the same. Love transformed both into men of justice; the Law was fulfilled and right action followed. While the choice for God brought deep joy, increasing interior freedom and integrity to their humanity, it also unleashed fierce psychological, ecclesial and political persecution. Romero experienced these three persecutions, and each brought him a personal experience of the Paschal Mystery. Each caused profound suffering, crucifixion and death, a prelude to something new God resurrected in him, his church and his country. Through it all, Romero became transfigured right before our eyes - into the likeness of Christ - worthy of the Kingdom of Heaven.

In 1966 Romero was at a turning point. He was forty-eight years old and facing his own failures. He had been recently ousted from the diocese of San Miguel, primarily because he tried to dictate the pastoral life of the diocese, causing constant tension with the priests. At the same time, twenty-five years after ordination, the consequences of repressed sexuality, lack of intimacy, and painful loneliness emerged. He acknowledged being unmerciful, judgmental, depressed, and unable to control his moods and temper. Increased fear, agitation, rigidity, obsession with perfection and lack of flexibility made him more miserable than usual. Desperate, Romero went on retreat in Mexico. He was physically, spiritually and psychologically exhausted. It was the perfect storm!

Hearing this, Fr. Juan Izquierdo, Romero's spiritual director, told Romero he was scrupulous. Dr. Dárdano, his psychiatrist, diagnosed him as an obsessive-compulsive perfectionist. Today the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual V would classify Romero as suffering with Obsessive Compulsive Personality Disorder. Izquierdo and Dárdano gave Romero concepts and explanations to comprehend his complex personality. In this darkness of uncertainty, confusion and inner chaos, grace entered. Romero would never be the same.

OVERCOMING HIS OWN SELF-PERSECUTION

Five years later, with fuller self-knowledge, Romero went deeper. From November 1971 to February 1972 he underwent psychoanalysis followed by an important Lenten retreat. Romero later wrote that these were life changing spiritual experiences because he came to appreciate clinical psychology as a companion to theology and morality, which helped to explain his personality disorder and its consequences. Psychoanalytic self-discovery entailed great risk to Romero's ecclesially defined self-concept; it also gave him a new understanding of his personality. By helping him accept his humanity,



psychoanalysis started a process whereby Romero learned to put his uncertainties and fears into perspective. Not surprisingly, his prayer changed, became more relational and contemplative.

Romero gained three key insights into his personality, originating in his childhood. These provided a context for his future choices, choices that would either contribute to his freedom and development or keep him stuck in former assumptions and behaviors. The first insight was Romero's immaturity when he vowed celibacy, lacking an understanding of the full ramifications of this commitment. Romero feared his sexuality and his need for companionship, and this fear kept him aloof, isolated, lonely, and feeling unlovable. The second insight was a fear of intimacy. Romero unconsciously transferred parental relationships onto his adult associations, recreating parent-child systems. This prevented him from making mutually nurturing friendships. The third insight was how fear utterly and unconsciously dominated his life. Fear and anxiety paralyzed his creativity, spontaneity, and the ability to delegate tasks and engage in a collaborative style of leadership.

Persons with OCPD are persecuted by a punishing superego. They have a rigid, intense, sharply focused style of thinking. They are continuously being attentive and concentrating, rarely letting their minds wander. They are disturbed by new information or influences outside their narrow, controlled range of focus. They actively work to keep new information and perspectives from entering awareness. These thought processes involve the entire person – the intellectual, emotional and behavioral dimensions. Obsessive-compulsive patterns derive from the assumptions persons make about themselves and their world. A primary assumption is they are unlovable or incapable of loving. Another is that successes, achievements and accomplishments determine personal value. These assumptions are cast in terms of right and wrong. Decisions, emotions and anything outside the “right” domain are considered wrong, so they live in fear of making mistakes. This goes much deeper. Fear of guilt at making a mistake gets interpreted as the shame inducing I am a mistake. The superego's persecution leads to self-sabotaging behaviors the sufferer interprets as evidence of their unworthiness.

LETTING GO OF SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS

Persecuted by his superego, Romero understood his efforts at holiness as insufficient. His ritually-patterned behavior is understandable as an attempt to allay his anxiety about perfect performance of prayer. His daily prayer schedule reflected that of one in initial formation rather than on apostolic mission. Since childhood his prayer had been sincere, frequent, pious and task-oriented. Where previously scrupulosity relentlessly drove him to task-oriented prayer, psychoanalysis opened the door to prayer as relationship.

Scrupulosity, a feature of OCPD, is generated by fear. In religious terms, a scruple is an unhealthy and morbid meticulousness that obstructs a person's religious growth. Scrupulous people are fearful of parental and authority figures; they fear the pain of disappointing them, or worse, being rejected by them. It is understandable, then, that scrupulous people project onto God the images which establish fear, not love, as the foundation of their relationship with God. Romero projected onto God his fears of his father, and later his religious superiors. Formed in a theology that emphasized the transcendence of God and an anthropology that focused on moral weakness, Romero's personality bled into his fear of an exacting and calculating God.

RESPONDING TO GRACE

Grace is prevenient, always ahead of us. Grace reaches into and summons us out of our personal hells, those places in our psyches' unhealed histories where the "enemy of human nature" lurks (as St.

Ignatius of Loyola describes it), tempting us to believe we are not loveable or worthwhile, or worse, that our lives do not matter. Grace reached into Romero's psyche and affected his personality by illuminating unrecognized blessings and the psychic unfreedoms caused by his OCPD. Grace dealt with him in his personal history, releasing the authentic power of his identity as a Beloved of God. Romero chose to respond to grace, and God led him through the crushing persecution of his superego to greater autonomy.

What Romero gained in these years brought to life a desire that shaped his identity, gave new meaning to his ministry, and helped him stand firm when facing persecutions from other sources. After graduating from the Gregorian University, Romero was ordained and began a doctoral program in ascetical theology (which he never finished because of World War II). Early in his studies, he wrote, "I've been thinking of how far a soul can ascend if it lets itself be possessed entirely by God." Romero desired to be possessed by God. Period! This desire was his charism. Present since childhood, Romero lacked the knowledge, means and method of dealing with the assumptions and fears that restrained him from allowing himself to be possessed entirely by God.

Animated by this desire and confident of grace, the self-knowledge gained through his retreats and therapy and a clinical explanation of his personality, Romero became an active participant in choosing what he valued. Romero faced the enemy of his human nature and engaged the intense struggles between his superego – the active, controlling,

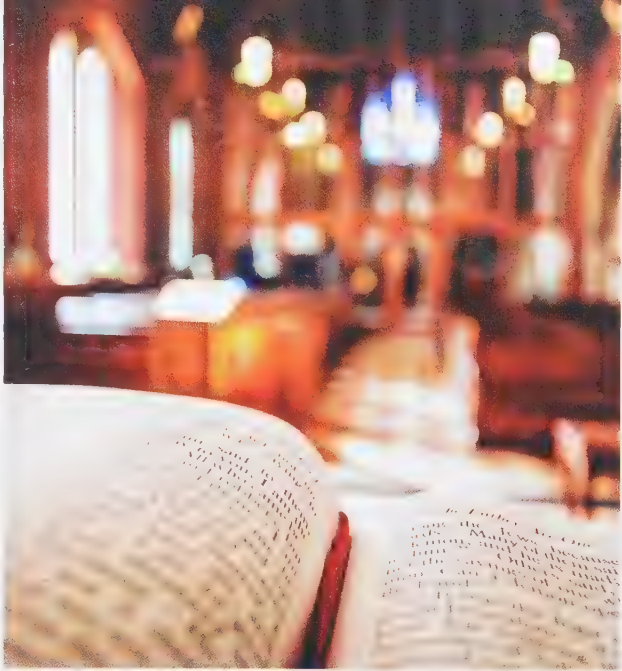
"Romero desired to be possessed by God. Period! This desire was his charism. Present since childhood, Romero lacked the knowledge, means and method of dealing with the assumptions and fears that restrained him from allowing himself to be possessed entirely by God."

perceiving, evaluative function of the personality - and the ego, the observing part of the personality that learns from experience. Recall the superego is the psychic energy that watches the ego and compares it with an ideal standard. The superego is also the agent of repression of instinctual impulses not in conformity with the standard or ideal. When growth occurs, the greater trust in learning from experience the more harshly the superego criticizes. Every choice Romero made to trust his experience of God's love for him transformed him into the man we saw in his last three years. Every time he allowed himself to be loved or chose friendship and human affection, every time he wept over injustice, delegated a task he would previously have dictated, or invited collaboration, his former assumptions and fears were crucified. Choosing love, God resurrected Romero's free and authentic self. The Law was fulfilled, motivating right action to struggle against the enemy of human nature, the insidious persecutor of his psyche and soul.

This inner persecution changed Romero. It gave him a framework beyond sin and grace, to understand the complexities of human nature, and by association, the institutions we operate in. It gave Romero the confidence, born of experience to endure his next persecution – at the hands of his own bishops.

ROMERO'S CONTINUING CONVERSION AND A NEW KIND OF PERSECUTION

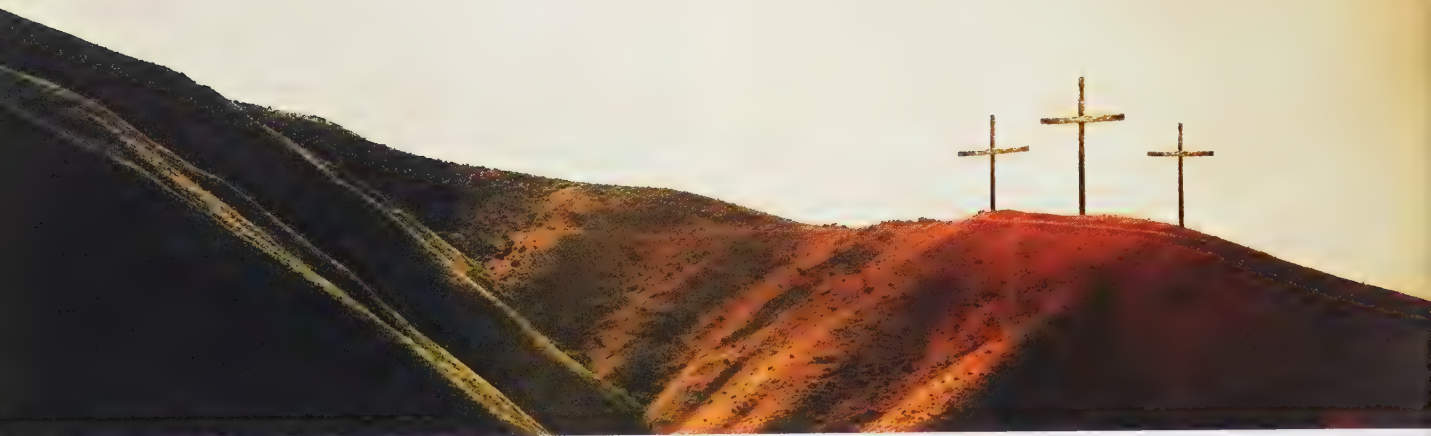
Romero desired to be a bishop with the heart of Jesus. When he was Ordinary of the rural diocese of Santiago de Maria, he came face-to-face with the Salvadoran political and military power when members of the National Guard massacred campesinos in his diocese. Weeks after his installation as Archbishop, Jesuit Rutilio Grande, a priest Romero greatly admired and held deep affection for, was assassinated - his murder ordered by the oligarchy. Because he construed Grande's murder as a bold act of persecution against the Church, Romero called the diocese together



to celebrate one mass - Grande's funeral - at the cathedral on the Sunday following his death. Romero's pastoral choice galvanized the conservative Catholic and governmental leadership against him. Without the understanding and support of the institutional Church, Romero's perspective changed. Once the uncompromising defender of orthodoxy, Romero chose to become a pastoral shepherd with the heart of Jesus. Romero came to recognize more clearly the poor, suffering Christ in the faces, lives and circumstances of the people he referred to as his brothers and sisters. His homilies, speeches, and pastoral letters testify he encountered Christ incarnate in the suffering poor. He knew the truth and he could not turn away his face, regardless of personal consequences.

As became his custom, the Archbishop knelt before an open Lectionary and newspaper as he prepared his weekly Sunday homily at the cathedral. Meticulously crafted with the best theological resources available to him, Romero spoke as a matter-of-fact, confident pastor. He came to see that when a homily pointed to political, social and economic sins, it was the Word of God taking flesh in the reality of the concrete situation.

Romero's homilies exposed and denounced the sins of the country, particularly the economic inequality



and greed. He denounced hypocritical and self-serving politicians and the interventions of the United States. He reproached those who distorted the Church's mission and manipulated the Church to further their own agendas.

Romero's pastoral letters and homilies increasingly defended the dignity and the value of human life, and condemned the numerous human rights violations left unpunished throughout the country. The Archbishop condemned the idolization of military power, and challenged the conscience of those in the military, going so far as to insist that the rank and file defy military orders when those orders contradicted the law of God.

A month prior to his assassination, Romero preached with extraordinary confidence. As part of his homily he read a draft of a letter he wrote to the United States President, Jimmy Carter. Its delivery met with thunderous applause and a standing ovation at the end; it also prompted the US National Security Council to dispatch the newly appointed US Ambassador to El Salvador, Robert White, to Rome to influence the Vatican to apply pressure to Romero. White, the quintessential diplomat, buried the idea of a trip to Rome to complain about Romero and instead made a diplomatic call on the Archbishop as

soon as he took up his new post. The more Romero begged for justice, the more tyrannical the military persecution, unleashing unprecedented force. Following that homily, civil war escalated, retaliatory political murders increased and a suitcase with dynamite was found in the basilica where Romero presided mass. The two refugee centers Romero founded were invaded, and the Salvadoran National Guard burned houses and crops of the refugees, killing men, women and children. Rectories, parish cooperatives, the Human Rights Commission offices and headquarters of the Mothers of Disappeared Persons were bombed. The Archbishop was murdered by a state-issued bullet that shredded his heart while he presided at liturgy, and God resurrected for us a witness worthy of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Our choices reveal our values, and our actions confirm those values. Pope Francis, perhaps recognizing what Matthew intended in this profound beatitude, gives us Oscar Romero's life and witness as a paradigm for our own discipleship. How far can a soul ascend if it lets itself be possessed entirely by God? The choice is ours.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. The 8th Beatitude is sometimes translated as persecution for justice's sake and at other times as persecuted for righteousness. The two translations are actually complimentary: we cannot fulfill the Law and be righteous before God unless we deal honestly with others. Either term involves persecution because we are living love of God and neighbor to such a degree that others cannot understand. Do I see the necessary link between the two perspectives? Listen to Blessed Oscar Romero's own words: "Good works, Christian hearts, true justice, charity – these are what God looks for in religion. A religion of Sunday Mass but unjust weekdays does not please the Lord. A religion of much praying but with hypocrisy in the heart is not Christian. A church that seeks to assure her own welfare with money and comfort but fails to protest against injustice would not be the true church of our Divine Redeemer. That is why the church must suffer and be persecuted, because many people set in their comfortable ways do not understand."
2. Damian tells the little known but fascinating story of Romero's own journey from self-righteous preoccupations (and what could be called "self-persecution") to being persecuted because of his outspoken criticism of social injustices in El Salvador. Could you identify with Romero's struggle to let go of the pursuit of personal perfection?
3. Notice his use of therapy as well as spiritual direction and prayer; the process took a long time. Have you ever accompanied someone on such a journey? Has a good friend accompanied you on such an exploration?
4. Once Romero found interior peace he was courageous enough to take bold and prophetic stands, knowing it meant much persecution – from Church as well as state. He spoke not in his own name but for the people as a whole; he was representative of a persecuted community. How could/should my parish take any stands regarding social justice issues (ex. life issues, refugees etc.)?



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Damian Zynda, Th.D., is the Director of Ignatian Identity at McQuaid Jesuit High School in Rochester, NY and she is also on faculty in the Christian Spirituality Program and the Master of Ministry at Creighton University and St. Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology. She has given and directed retreats and presented numerous workshops and lectures on spiritual direction, the supervision of spiritual directors, and the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. Interested in the intersection of spirituality and psychology, Damian's first book, *Archbishop Oscar Romero – A Disciple Who Revealed the Glory of God*, traces the spiritual development and psychological growth of Bl. Oscar Romero, articulating a Spirituality of Conversion that is both human and divine.

THE BEATITUDES: AN EXAMEN

"BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT, FOR
THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN."

We all tend to be attached to someone/something; in fact, we often define ourselves by relationships, titles or possessions. While many attachments are healthy and appropriate (marriage, family and friendship), this beatitude challenges us to a radical discernment about how all relationships and decisions about use of our time and resources might affect our primary relationship with God.

- Do I strive to be free of unhealthy attachments? What tendencies to possessiveness am I fighting at this time in my life?
- In prayer, do I resist the grace God offers?
- How available am I for others in need? Do I truly care about their pain or poverty?
- How might I myself or our family/community/parish create a "space" for receiving the pain of others?

"BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO MOURN, FOR
THEY SHALL BE COMFORTED."

Naturally, we all prefer joy over sadness; we even chide others for weeping. Jesus seems to be saying just the opposite! True consolation and peace cannot be rushed; they emerge gradually as we accept the things we cannot control. With the passing of time, our perspective changes and we begin to experience the sorrow God knows. In that moment, we also know the joy of God who sees potential for Resurrection, conversion, growth, freedom and new life – even in the process of our crying and dying.

- When was the last time I cried? Was it my own loss or a genuine sorrow over the terrible pain of another or communities dealing with violence, abuse, persecution or other tragedies?
- Am I quick to complain? Or conversely, do I try to deny pain?
- Think of a person who helped you find consolation in the midst of grief; express thanks to God for that person. Am I that kind of person for others by the way I listen without trying to solve the pain?
- How does our parish accompany those dealing with loss?



Father Raniero Cantalamessa, OFM Cap, preacher of the Papal household during the last three pontificates, has suggested that the Beatitudes provide an excellent mirror for examining our minds and hearts. The following questions composed by Msgr. Zenz may be of help for a personal or group examen during a Penance Service.

“BLESSED ARE THE MEEK; THEY SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH.”

St. Thomas Aquinas defines meekness as “power held in reserve.” A truly meek person (or community) is realistic and does not run away from challenges; those who are meek in the Biblical sense have the courage to be creative, patient and resourceful. The meek refuse to give into the temptation of fighting violence with violence.

- Harsh judgment and brooding anger within us eventually manifest themselves in angry words and violent deeds. What anger broods within my soul? How does our family/parish handle an anger we might share in common toward differing theological or liturgical viewpoints?
- How do I preserve a child-like heart: humble, spontaneous, playful, willing to let go and move on?
- Do I/we notice the “meek ones” in our community? How do we respect their space yet also provide opportunities for them to be included?

“BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO HUNGER AND THIRST FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS FOR THEY SHALL BE SATISFIED.”

Truth be told, most of us think of hunger and thirst in terms of our appetite for the comfort of nourishing food and relaxing drink. Jesus reminds us of a deeper hunger and thirst – for justice and peace, for a sense of being in harmony with God and neighbor, ultimately a hunger for holiness.

- Am I in touch with my desire for the deeper gifts of God? Does my hunger for earthly food remind me of my hunger for the daily bread the Lord alone can give? Do I see a connection between these layers of hunger within me and the same reality (perhaps even more profoundly) in the lives of billions of people near and far?
- How does our parish challenge us to connect the bread broken at Eucharist with bread broken for the poor?
- Do I understand that God’s sense of righteousness concerns decisive action for justice for all people? Do I see how personal holiness or righteousness is not possible without a committed concern for the spiritual and material well-being of all other people?

"BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL FOR THEY SHALL OBTAIN MERCY."

While mercy shows itself in specific decisions and actions, ultimately it is a virtue, an abiding awareness that all is God's gift. He offers mercy in many ways and wants us to let His forgiveness and compassion soften our hearts. He also challenges us to share that same gift with others.

- Do I recognize my need for God's forgiveness and mercy? How do I celebrate that gift? Do I share it with others?
- Mercy blesses both the giver and the receiver and often builds a new bond between them. Do I see that dynamic process at work in our parish?
- In many ways the Prodigal Father of Luke 15 embodies mercy: he patiently waits for return of both sons. Am I a patient person? Am I willing to forgive? Am I judgmental, jealous and angry when I see others being forgiven?

"BLESSED ARE THE PURE OF HEART, FOR THEY SHALL SEE GOD."

Purity of heart has to do with transparency, letting God shine through us. This virtue also includes having no agenda or prejudice, and good intentions, not malicious ones. I will find what I am looking for: if I want to see God, I will!

- When did I last have a sense of seeing the face of God: the face of a child? a dying relative? a stranger in need?
- Do I strive for purity in my life in what I look at on the internet, in how I treat my own body or in my speech?
- Am I "single-hearted" – focused on the things of the spirit or am I living with spiritual and material clutter?
- Hypocrisy is the opposite of this beatitude: are my words and deeds consistent? Am I worried about pleasing others and winning their esteem or am I truly seeking to serve without any expectation or ambitious desire?

CONCLUSION:

Every examen (and experience of reconciliation in ritual or in life encounters) should ultimately lead to a resolution about some specific change of mind or heart, attitude or action. We examine our conscience so that, going forward, we will be more focused and committed to a new life-style and set of priorities.

The Beatitudes are an excellent set of such resolutions: I will stop resisting happiness by being possessive or running from pain and denying or ignoring my own suffering or that of others. Positively put, I will embrace everything that happens as a means of discovery and sharing with others in God's joy. I will daily commit myself to pursuing the happiness that comes from living justly and temperately through my own diminishment. I will strive to be all the more fully immersed in the communion of your Body, the Church.

**“BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS FOR
THEY SHALL BE CALLED SONS AND
DAUGHTERS OF GOD.”**

Peace is more than the absence of conflict; it is not something human beings can broker all on their own. Peace is a gift of God, the presence of God that emerges and shines forth as we set aside our own interests. St. James teaches us that peace is the fruit of justice. As the Scriptural word for peace (shalom) reminds us, peace is the well-being or wholeness of each and all.

- Is the peace of Christ at the core of my heart?
How can I sustain personal and communal “wholeness?”
- Do I look for peaceful solutions wherein all partners’ perspectives and needs are acknowledged with respect?
- How could our community highlight our communal vocation to be the reconciling energy of God for all people?

**“BLESSED ARE THOSE PERSECUTED FOR
RIGHTEOUSNESS’ SAKE FOR THEIRS IS THE
KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.”**

The beatitudes were not only teachings of Christ but summarized His earthly ministry. They also reflect the community He created, His Body, the Church. This 8th beatitude (and its companion the 9th beatitude that follows immediately) captures the mystery of how Christ (and the Church today) are persecuted because people cannot seem to accept or believe selfless love.

- Many Christians at this very moment are being persecuted precisely and solely because they are Christians. How does their suffering both challenge and console me?
- Is our parish community experiencing any type of rejection or persecution (even in a subtle way)? How are we dealing with rejection or being stigmatized or mocked for our beliefs?
- On a personal level, how do I react when I suffer a wrong/injury or am treated unfairly by “the system?”
- Meditate on Colossians 1:24: “I fill up in my own body what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ for His Body the Church.” How does every member of the Church from the Pope on down hold the “tension” of the struggles of the rest of the Church. How does the redemptive suffering of others make me stronger in spirit? Do I believe that my own physical and psychological challenges - when borne in love - can be of intercessory power for the building up of others?

**Blessed are you my Lord and blessed are we who trust in your promises.
Amen.**

|||||
 *****AUTO**MIXED ADC 481
 HD070276461 0001
 GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL UNION 5001
 LIBR-SERIALS DEPT 042
 2400 RIDGE RD 00498
 BERKELEY CA 94709-1212

HD

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

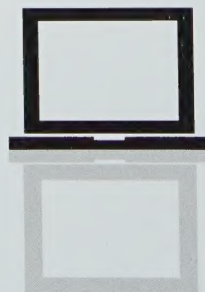
Upcoming Issues of HD

Spring 2017: Health of Mind and Body
 Summer 2017: On the Way to Freedom



Human Development Magazine is a quarterly publication for people involved in the work of fostering the growth of others.

This includes persons involved in religious leadership and formation, spiritual direction, pastoral care, education and those interested in the development of the whole person.



SUBSCRIBE ONLINE
HDMAG.ORG



CALL TO SUBSCRIBE
 1(800)555-1212